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news

significant shorts

Catholic order men deny 41 abuse charges

Two members of a Catholic religious order denied 41 charges of sexually abusing young boys when they appeared in court in Northern Ireland yesterday.

Joseph Scally, 61, and Thomas Tierney, 74, pleaded not guilty to the charges when they appeared for arraignment at Downpatrick Crown Court. The two men, members of De La Salle Order, are alleged to have committed the offences between 1961 and 1980, in North Antrim, North Down and West Belfast.

Mr Scally denies eight charges of serious sexual assault and 18 of indecent assault against 10 boys, while Mr Tierney denies eight counts of serious sexual assault and seven of indecent assault against three boys.

McAliskey held for two weeks

Suspected IRA terrorist Roisin McAliskey was yesterday remanded in custody for a further two weeks.

Ms McAliskey, 25, from Co Tyrone, the pregnant daughter of former MP Bernadette McAliskey, faces extradition to Germany in connection with a mortar attack on British Army barracks in Osnabrück last June.

She was remanded in custody to return to Bow Street Magistrates Court in central London on 16 January.

Prisoner found dead in cell

A prisoner was found dead in his jail cell yesterday.

Garry Smith, 38, from Paisley, was found at 7am in Gateside jail, Greenock. The Scottish Prison Service said the man's next of kin and police have been informed and a fatal accident inquiry will be held into the death. Smith was sentenced to two years and three months at Paisley Sheriff Court in May 1996 for breach of the peace and assault.

Queen to rent out top London property

Estate agents Knight Frank are expecting huge interest in one of London's most prestigious addresses, which is to be rented out for the first time.

No 1, Palace Green, a listed building overlooking Kensington Palace, home to the Princess of Wales, has been fully restored by the Crown Estate. The property is divided into six flats, with weekly rents ranging from £500 to £2,000.

A spokeswoman for Knight Frank said: "We are expecting the flats to be snapped up. You can rarely rent or buy anything in that location."

Vicar on trial for adultery

A vicar is to appear before an ecclesiastical court later this month accused of adultery, it emerged yesterday.

The hearing follows claims by Margaret Orpen, a mother of three, that the Rev Edward Glover made her pregnant six months ago while he was serving in the Trimdon area of Co Durham. Mrs Orpen said she had a miscarriage.

Mr Glover, married with two daughters, denies the allegation. He has resigned on the grounds of stress.

The hearing will take place at Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland, on 23 January.

Suspect IRA bomb found

Army bomb disposal experts were last night dealing with a suspicious object found in a derelict building in Cullyhanna, south Armagh, close to the Irish border.

Police and troops patrolling the area on Thursday cordoned off the building after noticing electrical wiring around a number of oil cans.

Security forces have been on a high state of alert following recent IRA and loyalist attacks. Earlier this week, a 1,000lb van bomb was defused after a lengthy operation in north Belfast.

Extra police brought in to hunt killer of the 'perfect schoolgirl'



Faces of anguish: Police are extending their hunt for the killer of Nicola Dixon (left). In Kilmarnock yesterday, Lisa Barrow (centre), returned home, but Kayleigh Ward is still missing

James Cusick

Extra police have been drafted into the squad hunting the killer of the murdered schoolgirl Nicola Dixon to follow up a large number of responses after a public appeal for information.

New leads the detectives will now be concentrating on include sightings of the 17-year-old sixth-former before she was sexually assaulted and repeatedly struck on the head as she walked to a pub in Sutton Coldfield town centre in the west Midlands on New Year's Eve. Her body was found face down

in the snow in a rectory garden on New Year's Day. From early examinations, police believe she had tried to protect herself during the horrific assault.

Chief Superintendent Colin Macdonald, in charge of the murder team, said yesterday: "We have had calls from people who were in the area, some who had sightings of the deceased and some who have actually named people they think may be responsible."

He said the priority would now be following up all the response calls over the next 24 hours.

Meanwhile in Scotland an-

other schoolgirl who had been missing from her Ayrshire home since New Year's Eve walked into a police station in Glasgow safe and well.

Lisa Barrow from Kilmarnock left home three days ago after telling her parents that she was going to a local shop for a magazine and a CD. Her disappearance had resulted in a full-scale police hunt.

Yesterday her brother, a 22-year-old soldier who had been serving in the Falkland Islands made a public appeal on behalf of the family for information and for her to come home. Only three hours after the appeal,

and described as looking "bale and heavy" the 15-year-old walked into a police station in Aikhead Road in the south-side of Glasgow.

The teenager is believed to have spent the past three days with a sister of the Big Issue, the magazine sold for the homeless. She told close friends that the man, believed to be in his early 20s, was her boyfriend.

Her safe return will have brought enormous relief to her Ayrshire hometown which this Christmas was only beginning to come to terms with the abduction and brutal murder last year of the 16-year-old Kil-

marnock girl Mhairi Julian. Strathclyde Police said the teenager would be interviewed by officers in order to establish her movements since Tuesday and check her welfare.

Inspector Gordon McManaghan, of Kilmarnock police station, said he doubted whether charges would be brought against the man as "nothing untoward had taken place or anything illegal".

"It would have been a very depressing start to the New Year if we had any other result other than this one," he said.

In Cheshire, police were continuing their search for another child. Posters are being

prepared to be put up around the country for information on the missing nine-year-old, Kayleigh Ward, from Chester. She has been missing since before Christmas. She is said to have vanished after leaving her home to go out and buy chips.

Described as "streetwise" for her age, she lived with her mother and two sisters in a hostel in Chester, but had spent time with travellers and tramps near her home.

Enlisting the help of the National Missing Persons Helpline, Chester Police repeated its call to the public for assistance in tracing the girl.

Major prepares to launch spring offensive

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

John Major will launch the Conservatives' spring offensive next week with his first Downing Street press conference since June 1995.

His appearance will follow a major television interview and a new poster campaign against Labour, and will mark the start of the run-up to the general election.

The last time the Prime Minister gave such a press conference, it was to announce that he was resigning and it sparked a campaign for the party leader-

ship. This time, with tension mounting over Europe and with speculation about who may lead his party after the election, the initiative will be designed to reassert Mr Major's authority.

However, the Prime Minister's stubbornly pro-European Chancellor appeared increasingly isolated last night as his cabinet colleagues hacked calls from the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, for a renegotiation of Britain's position.

Kenneth Clarke had insisted that the Government's "wait-and-see" policy on the single European currency should not

change before the election, but other ministers appeared to be trying to manoeuvre him into accepting a more Euro-sceptic stance.

Remarks by Mr Dorrell that the European Union should "put the economic horse back in front of the political cart" had been interpreted as a bid for his party's leadership. However, other cabinet ministers appeared to be using the comments in a bid to corner Mr Clarke last night.

While Mr Dorrell did not specifically mention the single currency, hacking from the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind,

and the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, gave heart to the Tory Euro-sceptic wing.

A cabinet meeting last month on the convergence criteria for entering a single currency ended with the policy unchanged, but Mr Clarke is due to present another paper on the subject after Parliament returns from its Christmas break on 13 January.

Mr Rifkind insisted that Mr Dorrell, hitherto regarded as a moderate on the European Union, had simply been following the agreed government line when he called for measures to reverse the drift to a "social Europe". However, he had had

to telephone Mr Dorrell to check what he was saying, he admitted. "He emphasised that he does not see the European Union purely as a free-trade area. He recognises... that it has to be more than a free-trade area, but must never become a European state," Mr Rifkind said on Radio 4 yesterday.

Later, Mr Howard said that Mr Dorrell had merely emphasised the key difference between the Tories and Labour on Europe. "We have a distinctive, British, Conservative vision of the kind of Europe that we want to build. He was talking about precisely that vision," he said.

The former Chancellor, Norman Lamont, seized on the opportunity to call for a fundamental rethink of Britain's relationship with the EU.

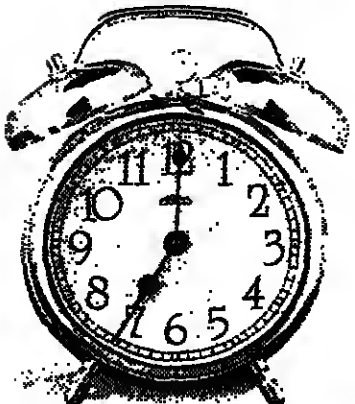
"There is a fundamental incompatibility between Britain's version of the EU and that of almost every other country in the EU. What Britain needs... is a completely new relationship with the EU," he said.

Both major parties will begin the new year with advertising campaigns. Yesterday the Tories sent a 1997 "horoscope" to electors warning them of dire consequences if Labour came to power.

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SWANSEA CORK FERRIES

Miles ahead of the the rest

Tory MP to quit due to stress

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

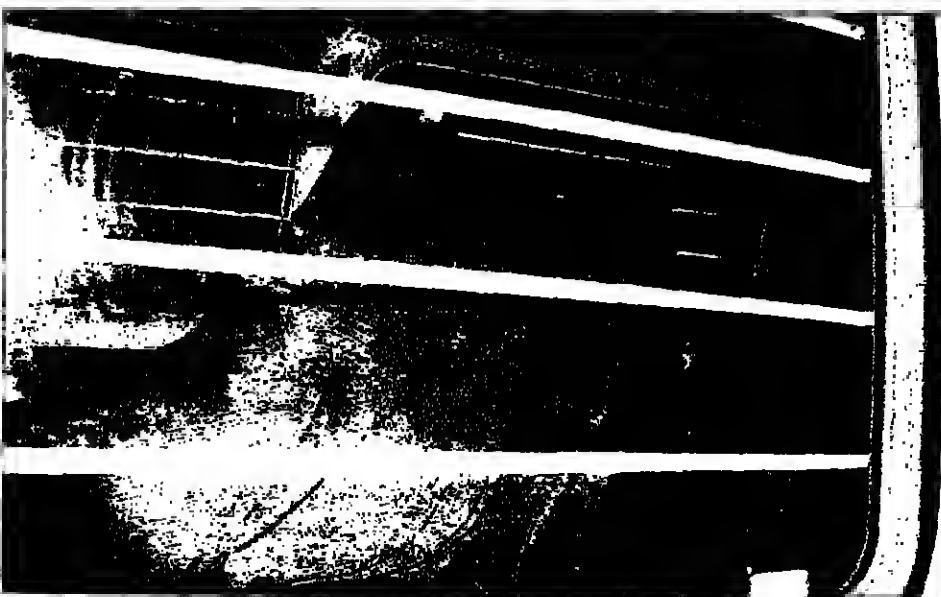
Barry Field, the backbench Conservative MP who was prepared to stand against John Major for his party's leadership in 1995, is to stand down at the general election.

Mr Field, who announced his candidature after Mr Major resigned his position in June but who withdrew when the former Secretary of State for Wales, John Redwood, entered the ring, is suffering from a stress disorder. He is known as a right-winger on law and order issues and is against any lowering of the age of consent for homosexuals.

The 49-year-old MP for the Isle of Wight, who is also a director of his family's undertaking business, said yesterday that he had been feeling unwell for some time. "I have suffered from stress and memory loss and a loss of feeling in some of my fingers. I had some tests with a consultant neurologist and he confirmed that I had a stress-related illness," he said.

Mr Field's agent, Maurice Cook, said both the MP and his constituency association were disappointed by the decision, which he had taken "with great reluctance".

The search for a successor to Mr Field as the Tory candidate will begin immediately and will be completed by next month. However, the seat is far from safe with a Conservative majority of just 1,800 and an electorate of 100,000. It would be lost to the Liberal Democrats on a swing of 1 per cent.



Under cover: David Jennings leaving Swaleside jail yesterday morning. Photograph: PA

Release for man who threatened 'a Dunblane'

David Jennings, the inmate who allegedly threatened to "do a Dunblane" was released from prison yesterday morning.

With his face and body covered with a blanket, Mr Jennings was driven at high speed past reporters outside Swaleside prison on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, in a prison van escorted by a police car.

Yesterday, the borough council in Greenwich, south-east London - Mr Jennings' home area - obtained a high court injunction banning him from entering any council buildings or schools. The temporary injunction obtained on Thursday also bans him from owning or carrying firearms or interfering with any children, teachers or staff at Greenwich schools.

The council took the action after reports that Mr Jennings, aged 50, had threatened to carry out a Dunblane-style mas-

sacre on his release. He is believed to be angry at the way his children have been treated at school and in care.

The father-of-ten made the alleged remarks last month to a chaplain at Highpoint Prison, Suffolk, where he was serving a 30-month sentence for assault. He was subsequently transferred to Swaleside.

Mr Jennings' solicitor, James Bancroft, said yesterday that his client admitted saying something similar to the alleged comments but insisted it was not a serious threat. "It was just rubbish he spouted off the top of his head while unburdening himself to the prison chaplain because the social services had failed in bringing his children to see him," he said.

Mr Bancroft said Mr Jennings would strongly contest the injunction at a court hearing on Monday when Greenwich will

be seeking a permanent court order. He said the terms of the ban would make it very difficult for Mr Jennings to live an ordinary life in an area where he had lived for 25 years.

Neighbours living near the home of Mr Jennings' second wife, Samantha, said they were deeply concerned about his release after the alleged outburst. Carole Tobin, 30, a mother of three, said: "I'm worried about my children's safety now. I used to let them play outside but now this man has been set free I'm terrified to let them out."

Another neighbour Irene Cunningham, 57, said: "It's disgusting that he's been set free after saying the things he did. He shouldn't be allowed out."

Plan for first Halal motorway station

A Pakistani community group is looking for European funding to set up Britain's first motorway service station serving halal meat and vegetarian curries.

The Birmingham-based Pakistan Welfare Association wants to build the £25m "balti-break" service station on the hub of the West Midlands motorway network which includes the M6, M5, M40 and M42 motorways.

If approved, work on the scheme, known as Shalimar 2000, could begin by the end of the year and completed by the end of the century. The 600 jobs set to be created would be mainly filled by members of Birmingham's large Muslim population and would be primarily aimed at them.

The idea came to retired teacher Mohammed Akram Mirza when he could find no service stations that served halal food - meat from animals slaughtered according to Muslim law. Mr Mirza, 60, vice-chairman of the welfare association based in Handsworth, Birmingham, said: "Being a Muslim I have to have halal food so it forced me to do some research."

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A dramatic new year holiday war has broken out as British Airways slashes its prices

Falling fares are just the ticket for travel

Simon Calder
Travel Editor

The New Year has brought a flurry of travel bargains which has reduced many fares to their lowest-ever levels in real terms. Anyone earning the average British salary, for example, can fly from London to Peking and back for a week's wages – and still have sufficient change for a return train ticket to Lille.

Yesterday British Airways startled the aviation world by introducing a fare from Heathrow to the Chinese capital of £309 return, including UK tax. The Earnings Information section of the Office for National Statistics reveals that this is £42 less than the average adult weekly wage in 1996. The new fare to the People's Republic is the most generous of the latest tranche of BA's World Offer tickets, which includes Belfast or Glasgow to London for £64 return and Birmingham-Paris for £99.

Historically, Peking has been one of the more expensive long-haul destinations from the UK. Only BA and Air China, the state airline, serve the 5,000-mile route direct from London. When BA began flying to Peking in November 1980, its lowest fare was about double this latest ticket price.

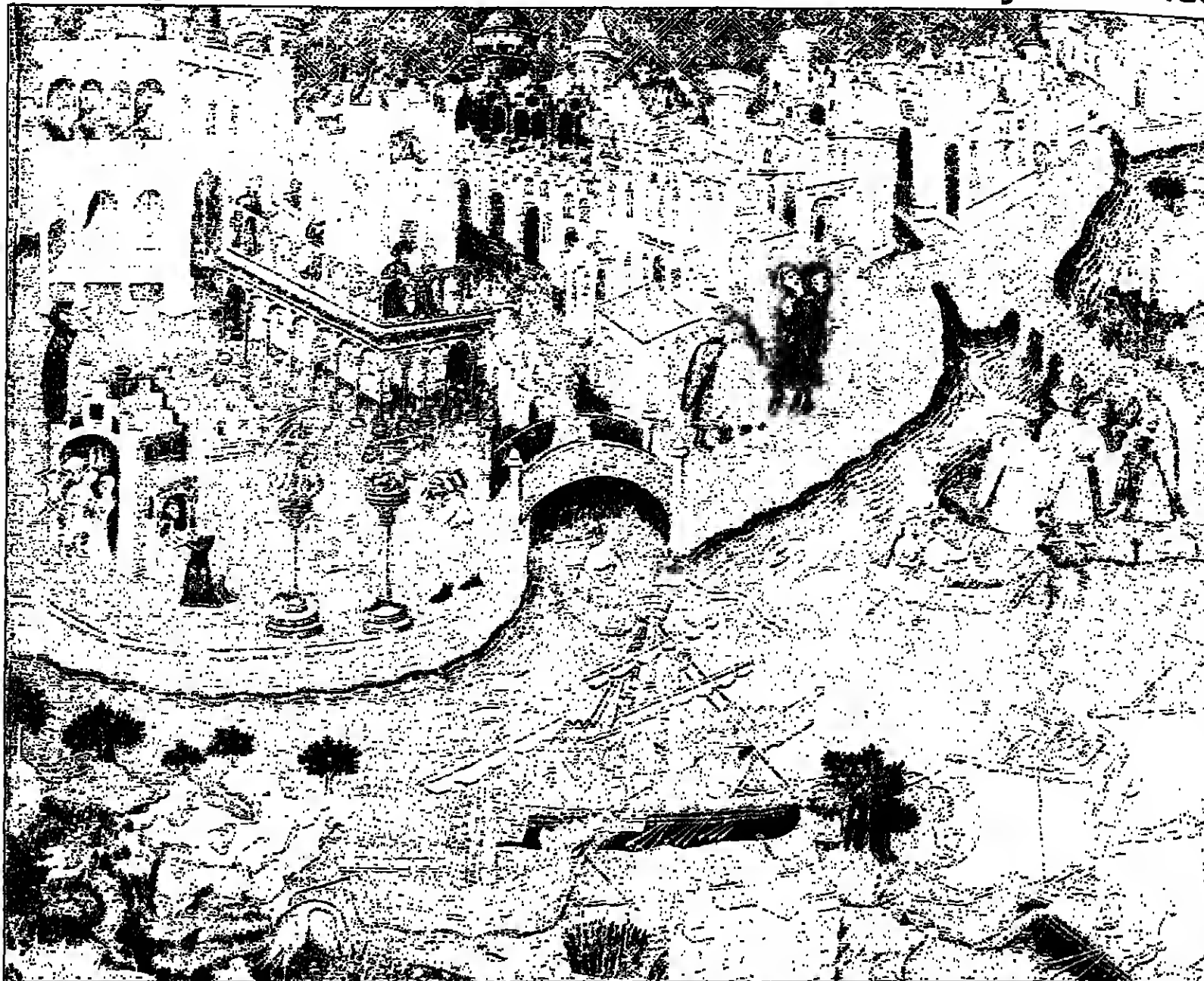
A specialist agent who has been sending tourists to the People's Republic for 21 years welcomed the airline's move, and said it could herald a boom in city-break holidays to the Chinese capital. Neil Taylor, managing director of Regent Holidays of Bristol, said: "To-

gether with the cheaper hotel rooms that have recently been introduced, it shows that China is now taking tourism seriously. The move could trigger the development of a whole new short-break market."

Only the hardest tourist would venture to Peking this month, however, since winters in the capital are harsh and many of the attractions are out-of-doors. BA's fare must be booked by 29 January, but can be used for departures up to 31 March – by which time more benign weather should arrive.

China can be expected to steal a fair amount of east-leaving leisure travel from Russia: BA's lowest fare to St Petersburg, for example, is the same as for Peking, even though the Russian city is far nearer.

Looking west, BA is offering a fare of £299 plus £18.40 tax to Los Angeles and San Francisco.



Long haul: Marco Polo leaving Venice by royal barge on the first leg of his journey, as recorded in *The Romance of Alexander* Photograph: ET Archive

co, but Virgin Atlantic has introduced a "Megasaver" fare to either Californian city that undercuts this by £10.

Official fares between London and New York, the busiest international air route, have

been cut too, but competition is so intense that much lower prices are available through discount agents. Previously, only smaller airlines like Kuwait Airways and El Al offered fares below £200 on the route, but Continental Airlines is selling a £185 ticket on its daily Gatwick-Newark services, through the discount specialists Trailfinders.

These low long-haul fares are a spin-off of the buoyant market for business travel. Though airlines decline to give precise load-factors for first and business cabins, premium seats are selling well and providing high yields. Therefore carriers are prepared to sell off economy space at almost any price.

Fares are also tumbling on planes and trains within Europe. Following the fire in the Channel Tunnel last November, Eurostar is seeking to boost travel with a range of day-trip fares from Waterloo International to France and Belgium starting

with a Calais special of £29 return and Brussels for £49. In competition, Virgin Express is charging £79 for flights from Heathrow to the Belgian capital. The coach operators, such as Hoverspeed, have been forced to offer fares at 1970s levels in order to attract custom for their much slower services: Hoverspeed is charging £27 return to Paris or Amsterdam.

Perhaps the fiercest fares battle, though, is taking place

within Britain. From Monday, National Express is offering a return fare of £9.99 on any route for travellers aged 50 or over.

In retaliation against cheap coach fares – and discount airlines such as EasyJet – Great North Eastern Railways has cut its one-way fares from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling to London to £19. The airlines have reacted, with BA dropping its lowest return fare between Glasgow and London to £64.

One organisation is hucking the trend for low fares, however. From tomorrow, the minimum tube fare within the central area of the London Underground rises by nine per cent to £1.20 – the most expensive urban public transport in the world.

■ *The Long Weekend* features a London travel special on pages 11-13, while today's *Independent Magazine* includes an alphabetical journey around the world.

Centuries too late for Marco Polo

Sam Coates

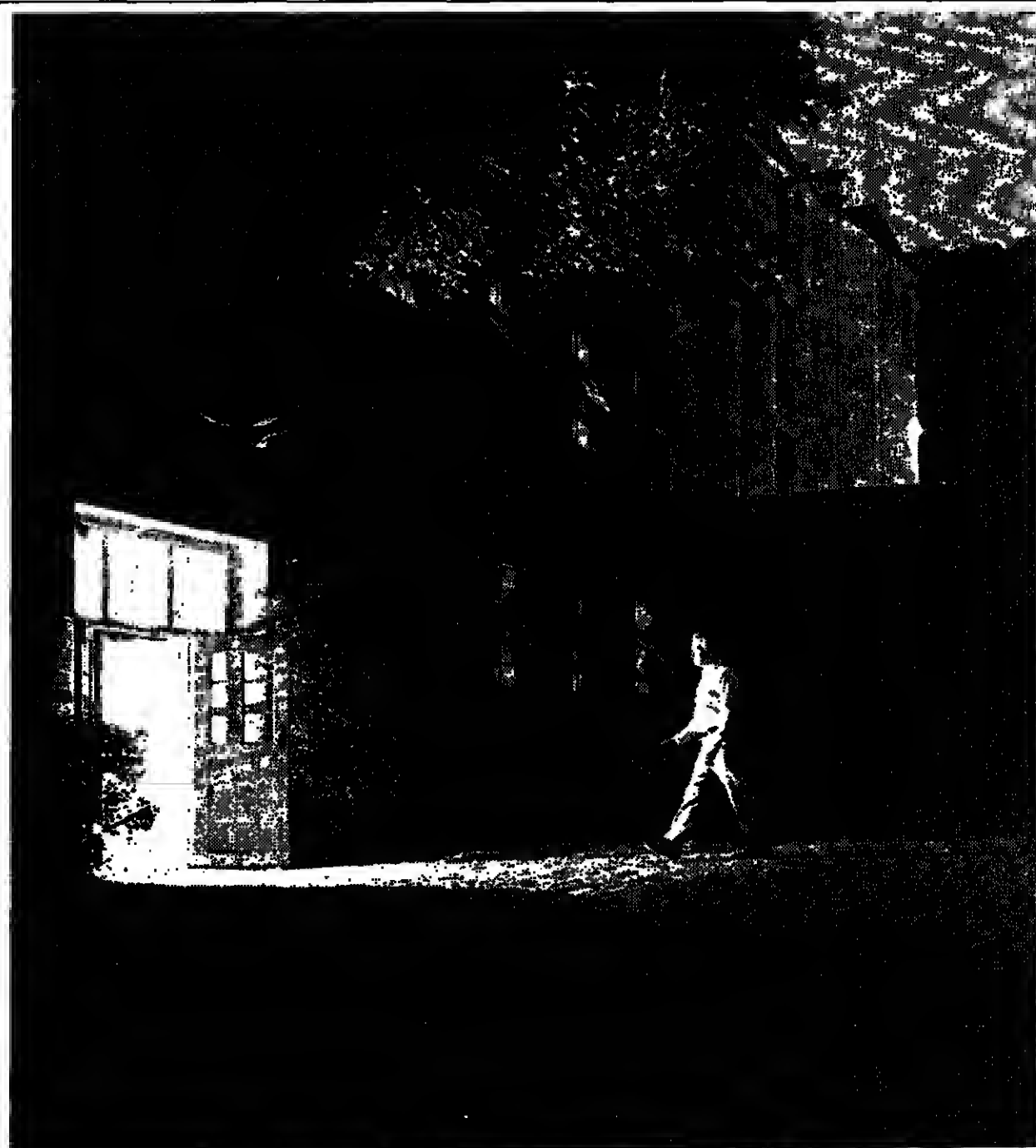
British Airways' most dramatic new price of £309 for the 5,000-mile trip to Beijing, taking under 10 hours, is in stark contrast to the cost and hardship facing earlier travellers. In 1271, for instance, it took Marco Polo two years to trek across Eastern Europe and Asia, accompanied by his father and uncle. The trip would have cost him many thousands of pounds at today's prices.

They started their journey from Venice in regal luxury, in a fast galley provided by the Christian king of Armenia. Pampered by the royal servants on board, no doubt BA's stewards would find it difficult to match the same level of service.

But after the extravagance of the first leg of the journey, life became a tougher. There were none of the benefits of business class for the merchants, for whom this was a working journey. In the absence of in-flight catering, they had to get food by trading goods for basic essentials like food and camels.

And if this was not enough, they had to overcome a number of physical obstacles: in their path were the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan and the Gobi Desert. They spent 30 days crossing the trackless wastes of the Gobi where, Polo writes, he only just managed to resist the fatal lure of the sirens.

The latest Hollywood blockbuster is the main entertainment available at 30,000 feet. However Polo's trip was filled with a vast array of bizarre encounters which he recorded in his *Description of the World*. While crossing the Gobi, he wrote that they encountered a group of women who had no hair except on the top of their heads.



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JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Parents' plea over drugs

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

The parents of one of the three young people who died during New Year parties, apparently after taking ecstasy tablets, yesterday made an emotional appeal for other teenagers to reject drugs.

Maria Hitchens, whose son Robert, 16, collapsed at 6.30am on New Year's Day at an all-night rave party in Heston, west London, said: "I have lost my son. I will never see him again. Please take note of what has happened and never take this stuff again."

Robert, from Uxminster, Essex, who is thought to have taken ecstasy, was taken to hospital where he died hours later. A post-mortem examination yesterday was inconclusive.

As in the other recent cases it is still unclear whether impurities and other substances such

as heroin or LSD in the ecstasy tablets could have been responsible for the deaths, or if the pure drug caused a fatal reaction.

Speaking at a news conference, Robert's father John described his son, a trainee computer engineer, as a "wonderful" young man.

"I couldn't wish for a better son, an absolute treasure. He was lively, comical, a cheeky little monkey. He had a bright future in front of him, he had just left school after he got some good results."

He appealed to other parents to keep a watchful eye on their children's activities.

"I know he's gone, he's dead, that he will never come back. Please, look at your children, ask them questions, don't take no for an answer."

He added: "You can't explain to people the loss of a child. You expect your parents to die eventually, you're not ready for it,

but you come to terms with it, but you expect your children to outlive you."

Both parents said they were unaware of their son taking drugs.

Asked how Robert's 19-year-old brother Matthew, who was at the fatal party, had taken the death, Mr Hitchens said: "Matthew has taken it very badly, he's trying to cope with it, but he's lost his brother, and they were very close boys."

Detective Inspector Sue Hill, the officer in charge of the investigation, said until they had the results of toxicology tests they could not be sure that Robert had taken ecstasy.

Asked what was being done to find whoever had supplied the tablets, she said: "I have got a number of officers actively pursuing that line of inquiry, to catch the supplier of these drugs."

She said Robert had gone to

the rave at a sports centre on New Year's Eve, arriving there some time after midnight with his brother and a friend.

Det Insp Hill said it was unlikely Robert bought the tablets at the party and may have got them in his home area.

"There were 35 security guards on duty that night, who were searching these young kids when going into the centre."

But she warned that youngsters can take tablets before they arrived somewhere, or conceal them on their body.

"If you take ecstasy, you're playing Russian roulette with your life," the detective added.

His death follows that of Bilal Hussein Bhayat, 18, at a New Year rave in Cardiff, and Nicola Edwards, 24, from Middlesbrough, who died in police custody after being detained on her way to a party near Edinburgh. Both are thought to have died after taking ecstasy.

HOCKNEY What's he up to now?

Read Andrew Marr's exclusive interview and get an original David Hockney NewsPrint with every copy of Tuesday's *Independent Tabloid*



news

Shephard prepares for battle of the basics

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Gillian Shephard, yesterday signalled a new campaign to raise standards of literacy and numeracy, paving the way for a pre-election battle of the basics with Labour.

Mrs Shephard's announcement, at the North of England Education Conference in

Sheffield, stole a march on Labour, which is due to publish its own proposals for a literacy campaign within weeks.

Her address, conspicuously lacking electrifying fire, is due to be followed today by a forceful assault on the Conservatives' education agenda by Labour's education spokesman, David Blunkett.

Mr Blunkett will blame a skills shortfall on 17 years of Tory rule and warn of a string

of dangers lying ahead if the Conservatives win a fifth term in Government. A further term in power would mean "five more years of dogma driving education policy, instead of clear practical policies to raise standards", he will say.

Mrs Shephard placed new emphasis on the three Rs, just a year after announcing plans for literacy and numeracy centres in 27 local authorities to tackle the same problem. She told the

conference that schools, colleges and local authorities had made great strides in boosting basic skills, but acknowledged a lack of co-ordination among the agencies engaged in the "battle for basics".

A "small but significant minority" of young people were still leaving education with inadequate standards of literacy and numeracy. Employers had "widespread concerns" about job applicants' basic skills,

and even doubted the suitability of graduates. School-leavers with poor literacy and numeracy faced a bleak future, excluded from a life of learning and many job opportunities.

Later this month, Mrs Shephard will announce proposals to involve every education and training agency in a national campaign to boost basic skills standards. Key players will include schools, further and higher education institutions, the

schools inspection agency Ofsted, teacher-trainers, local authorities and employers.

Mrs Shephard said: "Through clearer target-setting and better co-ordination, I am convinced we can bring about greater and more effective help to those who need it."

Labour will next month publish details of its strategy, developed by the party's literacy task force, to ensure the reach-

ing age of all 11-year-olds matches their years.

Mr Blunkett will say today: "We cannot tolerate 40 per cent of our primary school children not reaching an acceptable standard when they transfer to comprehensive school. We cannot have over a third of our children two or more years behind in their reading ability."

He will claim that a fifth term of Conservative rule would mean selection in primary

schools, leading to reduced parental choice, and to the "privatisation" of schools via a voucher system. A new funding formula for schools would be introduced, cutting over £600m from existing spending, leading more parents to have to raise funds themselves to pay for books and materials, he will say.

Mr Blunkett will also announce Labour proposals to use lottery funds to train teachers in computer skills.

Scotch rocks market with whisky galore on the box

Glenda Cooper

Computer-generated grouse walk across our television screens. A man drinks whisky to celebrate going surfing in Australia. Spirits advertising, never seen on television before 1995, is here with a vengeance.

Last year the industry spent £10m on television advertising alone. Christmas and the New Year were a crucial time for sales.

United Distillers, producer of Bell's whisky, is said to have spent £2.3m on Bell's and Gordon's gin this Christmas. Glenmorangie, the top-selling single malt in Scotland, is estimated to have spent £600,000 on a mixture of television and other advertising, including a relaunched internet site.

The drive appears to be paying off according to latest figures. For the nine months up to September Scotch whisky sales reached 18.9 million litres. The corresponding figure for the year before was 17.1 million. Alan Gray, whisky analyst for the stockbrokers Sutherlands, estimates that 33 million litres were sold by the end of 1996.

Much of this was undoubtedly due to the Chancellor's decision to cut duty on spirits by 4 per cent in each of the past two years. However, whisky manufacturers are aware they cannot rely on kindly budgets alone to boost their sales.

Research by the Glasgow-based Fraser of Allander Institute for Allied Distillers reveals the Chancellor would need to cut duty on whisky by 4 per cent a year for 13 years before the



Flowing profits: A Bell's whisky advertisement

In tandem with the two successive budget cuts, the first for 100 years, the spirits industry is beginning to move away from its "old man" image in order to lure young drinkers from designer beers, wine and alcopops.

"This was the second Christmas the industry used television," Mr Gray said. "It was long overdue. It seems they were very silly not to do it before. Television is the medium young people identify with."

Andy Neal, consumer marketing director for United Distillers, said the advertising has been planned to attract a wider audience without alienating the traditional older whisky drinker. The Bell's advert is a leaving do, featuring a thirty-something male leaving his firm to go surfing in Australia. It is complete with a coy reference to an office affair with "Amanda", and the catchline, "The time is right".

"Whisky has been around for 500 years. It is going to take years to change the way people think. We are working on a five-year programme," Mr Neal said.

"Notwithstanding that when we started advertising in Scotland and the North-west... our share of the whisky market there went up 1 or 2 per cent, which is quite significant. And we are confident [after] this Christmas that nationally we will have our best performance."

Campbell Evans, spokesman for the Scotch Whisky Association said the industry had taken a "major step forward" this year. "But it is only the first step in a long-term programme."

burden of tax on spirits equalled that on wine and beer.

Television advertising was something that was "long overdue", according to Alan Gray, a whisky analyst for the stockbroking firm Sutherlands.

By shunning television for more than 40 years, partly because of a "gentleman's agreement" in the industry and partly because exports in the 1960s and 1970s were so healthy, "it has

been said Scotch whisky missed a generation, and I agree with that," Mr Gray said.

In past decades, exports to southern Europe grew by as much as 9 per cent a year, so distillers were able to put up with static sales in Britain, which accounts for 10 per cent of the Scotch whisky market.

But when exports slowed down, tales of "Scotch on the rocks" became more common.



Art for art's sake: Sean Fall, of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, unwraps *La Place Clichy* by Renoir, at Christie's, London, in preparation for the Treasures for Everyone exhibition which opens on Monday. The masterpiece is one of 150 works, acquired through the National Art Collections Fund, which will be on show Photograph: Tom Pilton

Party for the single minded

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour's claim to be the party of family values was beginning to wear thin yesterday as it emerged that its new crop of parliamentary candidates is less likely to be married or to have children than existing MPs.

As the Prime Minister made a bid to win back the family vote for the Tories, an analysis of Labour's likely MPs after the election showed that marriage and children were not at the top of their list of priorities.

If Labour wins the election with a working majority, less than two-thirds of its new male MPs will be married, compared with more than three-quarters at present. However, Labour men are still more likely to be married than the rest of the adult population, where the proportion is six out of 10.

Labour women, on the other hand, are far less likely to be married. Only half the party's female MPs are currently married. Only a quarter of existing women MPs and a fifth

of female candidates are married with children.

Very few of the new candidates, either male or female, admitted to being divorced or separated although about a quarter did not fill in the family section of the questionnaire on which the *New Labour Guide* is based. While 8 per cent of male Labour MPs and 19 per cent of female MPs are divorced, only 2 per cent of men and 5 per cent of women candidates were willing to reveal this information.

The guide, compiled by DPR publishing, was published as the Prime Minister launched a new offensive on family values. In the foreword to a book of his 1996 speeches entitled *Our Nation's Future*, John Major says the family, as well as the nation, is essential to every individual's security.

In an attempt to put distance between the Tories and Labour, he attacked "the incursions of the faceless state" into relations between parents and their children, and said families should be given more freedom to make their own decisions.

Intelligent tags to fix the future

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The cost of items such as washing machines, televisions and computers could be pushed up in the next century by "intelligent tags", which will be able to detect whether they need repairs and allow them to be given new functions without being touched.

The tags are tiny computer chips which can also have a built-in radio transmitter and receiver, meaning that they can send and receive data from a distance. A faulty washing machine could diagnose its problem and broadcast it to a repairer, shortening the time needed to fix it. Software with extra programmes - such as a new way in which woollens or coloured clothes - could also be loaded into such a machine, using the radio connection.

In the UK, 36 retail organisations are studying the potential of such tags. Though they currently cost about £20, simpler versions with a minimum of detail could cost less than £1.

A simpler form of the tags are already used by the US military and large corporations for warehousing and stocktaking systems. The US military realised it needed such tags during the Gulf War when it sent a large amount of military equipment in hundreds of shipping containers to a store in the desert.

"They were all in a huge open field. But then someone said, 'Let's have the parts for that tank'. The trouble was, they knew the parts were there somewhere, but they didn't know where," said Jeremy Holland, business analyst at the Centre for the Exploitation of Science and Technology, who has just completed a report on the topic for the Department of Trade and Industry. "They reckoned that \$3.5bn was wasted as a result."

Retailers such as Ikea and Dixons, electronics giant Philips and whisky distillers are keen to use such tags in their warehouses. "Putting a £20 tag on a pallet of whisky or TVs doesn't add much to their overall cost, but it can save a lot of time," said Mr Holland.

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ZANUSSI 1200 Spin 'EcoSystem' Autowasher. Variable spin selector. Super economy button. Model F1229. Was £459.99. In-store Price £429.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £449.99**

AEG 1000 Spin 'Digital' Autowasher. Self-adjusting water level. Quiet operation. Model 6200. Was £379.99. In-store Price £349.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £299.99**

BOSCH 1000 Spin 'Fuzzy Logic' Autowasher. Delay timer. Model WFL200GB. Was £429.99. In-store Price £399.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £349.99**

PHILCO 1000 Spin 'EcoTronic' Autowasher. 14 programmes. Half load. Model WD100SE. Was £349.99. In-store Price £319.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £299.99**

HOOVER 1100 Spin 'Soft Wave' Weather Dryer. Ecological wash system. Available in White or Almond. Model A274. Was £399.99. In-store Price £359.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £319.99**

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CREDA 1100 Reverse Action Tumble Dryer. 2 heat settings. 2 heat settings. Model 37751. Was £219.99. In-store Price £179.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £159.99**

CANDY Full Size 'EcoSystem' Dishwasher. 4 programmes. Ecological wash cycle. Model C4100. Was £399.99. In-store Price £359.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £299.99**

HOOVER Full Size 'Soft Wave' Dishwasher. Multi-directional spray. Economy option. Model D7430. Was £429.99. In-store Price £399.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £369.99**

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BEKO 4.7 cu.ft. Upright Freezer. Fast freeze switch. Indicator light. Model B2642. **VOUCHER PRICE £149.99**

CREDA 4.2 cu.ft. Upright Freezer. 8 programmes. Model 8307. Was £299.99. In-store Price £279.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £239.99**

CANDY 9.8 cu.ft. Fridge Freezer. 5.7 cu.ft. fridge. 4.1 cu.ft. freezer. Model CCM30126. Was £299.99. In-store Price £279.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £249.99**

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ELECTROLUX 9.8 cu.ft. Fridge Freezer. 5.7 cu.ft. fridge. 4.1 cu.ft. freezer. Model E2055. Was £299.99. In-store Price £279.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £249.99**

ELECTROLUX 9.8 cu.ft. Fridge Freezer. 5.7 cu.ft. fridge. 4.1 cu.ft. freezer. Model E2055. Was £299.99. In-store Price £279.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £249.99**

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FRIGIDAIRE 50cm Eye Level Electric Cooker. Single oven with glass door. Model C7145D. Was £169.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £149.99**

CREDA 50cm Eye Level Electric Cooker. Separate oven and grill. Model 40221. Was £299.99. In-store Price £279.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £239.99**

PARKINSON COWAN 50cm Eye Level Electric Cooker. Separate oven and grill. Model LYRIC 50GDR. Was £449.99. In-store Price £419.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £379.99**

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TEKA Gas Hob. Self-clean burners. Model A4P also available. Was £299.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £239.99**

TEKA Gas Hob. Self-clean burners. Model A4P also available. Was £299.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £239.99**

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SHARP 0.6 cu.ft. Compact Microwave. 600 watts power output. Model K2V18. In-store Price £84.99. **VOUCHER PRICE £69.99**

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Figure 1

Labour's announcement yesterday that its membership had topped 400,000 was hailed by its deputy leader, John Prescott, as evidence that the party was the "biggest in Britain" and the "fastest growing in western Europe".

But party critics warned of a "massive but passive" membership being used as a fan club for a leadership increasingly tightening control of a centralized machine.

Labour leaders have spoiled their achievement by over-claiming, but the 54 per cent increase in the 30 months since Tony Blair became leader in July 1994 is a marked turn-round at a time when many assumed that the age of the mass political party was long past.

Mark Seddon, editor of the left-wing *Tribune* newspaper, compared the party's new recruits to members of the National Trust. "The upsurge has been in all those places where people are more likely to respond to demands for money from the national party," he said, rather than contributing to

Old and new: Membership reflects a sea-change away from the activism of the Sixties (left) to a more 'passive', affluent constituency, celebrated by John Prescott (right) Photograph (right): Philip Meech

more active local parties. He said an increasingly middle-class, inactive membership was part of the leadership's plans, revealed in *The Independent*.

this week, to abolish constituency-wide party committees and to end the policy-making role of party conferences. He promised all-out resis-

tance: "I just don't think it's going to happen. The constituencies won't have it," he said. "I'm delighted the membership is growing, but you have got to

He compared the Blair boom to the heyday of CND and the launch of the SDP, whose mass

recruits failed to last. He added that there was plenty of evidence of people whose membership had lapsed when they became disillusioned, but whose

A Liberal Democrat spokesman also cast doubt on the methods Labour used to

pay the full £16-a-year subscription, which revealed that they were more middle-class than the average Tory member, but did not reveal anything about their politics.

[illegible]

late. He said Jerry Mars' the former boxer and Lib-Dem candidate in Basildon, whose Labour membership lapsed two years ago, received a ballot paper for October's vote on Labour's early manifesto.

Conservative Central Office estimates there are 750,000 members of its autonomous local associations.

"While we accept that we have lost some members since then, we believe that overall we have gained substantial numbers as well," the party said in a statement yesterday.

Mr Prescott poured scorn on the figure, citing independent estimates as low as 300,000 as the basis of Labour's claim to have overtaken the Tories. "I challenge them to produce a list of every single member of the Tory party," he said, and threw down the same gauntlet to the Liberal Democrats, who have claimed about 100,000 members for the past four years.

Mr Prescott launched Labour's recruitment effort at the end of his first party conference as deputy leader, in October 1994.

Yesterday, he set a new target of 500,000 by the end of 1997 - which represents a minor slippage from the deadline of the general election which he set two years ago.

But the big unanswered question is: are the new members New Labour?

The party last year carried out an analysis of its members who

members' attitudes, by Professor Patrick Seyd of Sheffield University, was carried out when John Smith was leader in 1992. Professor Seyd admits the lack of data is frustrating: "Mr Blair obviously thinks they are malleable credit card payers, whereas the Left thinks they are crypto-SDP-ers. We simply don't know."

The Independent conducted its own mini-survey of 50 new members in the Brighton Pavilion constituency in September 1995, which suggested that their attitudes were similar to those of existing members. Many new joiners were lapsed members or long-time supporters.

Last October's ballot for the national executive is the most recent indicator, and it suggested there might be a shift in favour of more "Blairite" candidates. The poll was overshadowed by the drama of whether Harriet Harman would hold her place despite sending her son to a selective grammar school - she did, comfortably, which was itself significant.

The poll also saw another rise in the votes for left-wingers Diane Abbott and Dennis Skinner both up 9,000, but bigger rises for Robin Cook (24,000), David Blunkett (18,000), Mo Mowlam (15,000) and Gordon Brown (14,000). The first two were regarded as "soft Left", but Mr Mowlam and Mr Brown are more repentant "modernisers".

Letters, page 11

Labour party membership

Year	Membership (approx.)
1992	270,000
1993	270,000
1994	250,000
1995	350,000
1996	420,000

Who belongs to which party?

- Average age of Labour members: 42
- Average age of Tory members: 62
- One-third of Labour members who pay full subscriptions have annual household incomes over £30,000
- Only one quarter of Tory members have annual household incomes over £30,000
- Of full-fee Labour members, 86 per cent are home-owners
- The Tories claim 750,000 members, but independent estimates put the figure between 300,000 and 500,000
- The Liberal Democrats claim around 100,000 members
- The German Social Democrats have 800,000 members
- The Swedish Social Democrats have 260,000, equivalent to 1.7m for a country the same size as the UK
- The French Socialist Party has only 135,000 members
- Labour claims an 85 per cent retention rate, with twice as many members joining as leaving
- There are two women for every three Labour men
- Tory membership peaked at 2.75m in the 1950s
- Labour membership peaked at 1m in the 1950s

Millennium plans lose £3m funding

The Millennium Commission has withdrawn funding from two projects - the first to be refused in such a way - because they have failed to meet the necessary conditions, it emerged yesterday.

The £5m Millennium Markers scheme to attract more tourists to the River Thames has been halted, as has a £1.4m plan to build a railway linking two popular tourist sites in Northern Ireland.

A spokesman for the Millennium Commission said it could not give the £2.75m allocated to the Markers scheme because it was judged unviable.

Plans to build a tourist railway between the Giant's Causeway and the Bushmills whiskey

together were pledged £3.45m of lottery money by the Commission, are the first to have funding withdrawn.

The riverside scheme would have seen 10 markers and visitor centres placed along the Thames from New Gardens to Hampton Court.

The spokesman said: "The Commission is spending public money and has to be sure a project is going to happen. That's why we allocate the money and sign legal documents to make sure that the money has been spent wisely."

In Northern Ireland, the railway proposal could not proceed because land needed for the project could not be bought.

[illegible]

The two schemes, which



Striking a note for women at St Paul's

The Aurora Nova choir rehearsing in the stalls at St Paul's Cathedral, London.

The first all-female choir to sing in the cathedral, Aurora Nova will perform at two services tomorrow: Sung Eucharist at 11am and Evensong at 3.15pm.

The choristers will also be singing tonight in a programme called Ave Maria, which will include Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. The performance at Hampstead Parish Church, north London, starts at 7.30pm and is in support of Breakthrough and other charities which help women who suffer from domestic violence and breast cancer.

They will be directed by Patrick Craig. Tickets, priced £6, are available on the door.

Photograph: David Rose

Low-paid jobs keep poor in poverty

David Walker

The notion that the poor can pull themselves up by the bootstraps by taking available paid work is challenged in a study of life on a low income.

Though it avoids the word "underclass", the study – published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics – finds there is a large group of people which moves in and out of jobs but remains in poverty.

Jobs, Wages and Poverty identifies a social group, in author Paul Gregg's words, "constantly cycling between low-paid employment and worklessness". The problem is not that these people do not want to work, but that the kind of jobs they find – often seasonal, part-time, or casual – are, by their nature, short-term, and those employed in this way will soon become unemployed again.

A "snapshot" of numbers in employment – often used by government ministers to bolster claims of economic recovery – often overstates the extent to which jobs last.

Even if more people are in employment, says the study, it does not necessarily follow that they are able to move up the income scale.

The first rung on the jobs ladder is often extraordinarily slippery, says Mr Gregg. Over the course of a year, about half of those with the lowest incomes – those in the lowest 10 per cent income bracket – moved up in terms of their incomes. But they did not move far and were in constant danger of falling off the ladder.

Younger people in general find it easier to move off benefits and to advance up the jobs ladder. In a similar position are those who have been out of work or in a badly paid job for only a short while. Men and women whose partners have a job find it considerably easier to move back into permanent employment. Single mothers and families with adult children where everyone is unemployed find it exceedingly difficult to shake off poverty, says the study.

Government policy has recently put more emphasis on moving people out of dependence on social security and into jobs. Last autumn, income support for the unemployed was replaced by the Job Seekers' Allowance and pilot schemes have been launched which require benefits claimants to take available work.

Mr Gregg's report claims it is not enough to get people into jobs which may not last. Government should concern itself with the second, or even third job that might be offered to a previously unemployed person.

"Employment offices should perhaps even start to think in terms of 'career management', to ensure there are incentives to keep the low-paid moving up the income ladder," he says.

Research by the Policy Studies Institute calls into question many calculations made in assessing social security benefits. Many couples live as cheaply as one person, a study found. But the cost of children, especially younger children, is often greater than allowed for in calculations for income support.

Prisoner died 'after beating by officers'

An inmate died after being beaten up in his cell by prison officers, an inquest jury was told yesterday.

Peter Smith, who was in the cell next door at Belmarsh Prison, in Woolwich, south-east London, claimed the thuds of their kicks landing on Kenoeth Severin's body were clearly audible.

"He kept on shouting 'call the police, call the police'. Gradually his voice got lower and lower, fading away... then his voice stopped," he told the hearing.

Looking through the hatch in his cell door a short while later he saw several officers dragging Mr Severin, 25 – who had a history of schizophrenia – down the corridor.

Next morning he learned that Mr Severin was dead. He was the third black man to die in prison between October and November 1995.

Southwark Coroners' Court heard that Mr Severin, who was unemployed, from Greenwich, south-east London, had been

remanded for trying to break into a former girlfriend's home.

In the early hours of 26 November, he was moved to a strip cell in the jail's hospital wing for allegedly being disruptive, and he later collapsed.

Donna Ward, a nurse on duty, said that despite being handcuffed Mr Severin struggled so violently in the strip cell that it took six officers to control him. His family was originally told his death was drug-related but later learned he had been restrained.

Mr Smith said he first realised something was wrong when he heard Mr Severin shouting and banging his chair. "This went on for a long time," he recalled. "Other prisoners were getting annoyed with the noise he was making and told him to shut up."

Mr Smith told the jury that two prison officers then walked up to Mr Severin's cell but left to get some colleagues in order to "fix this guy". The hearing was adjourned until Monday.

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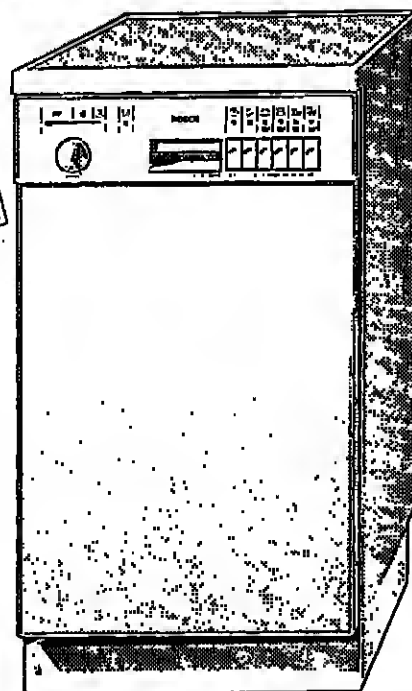
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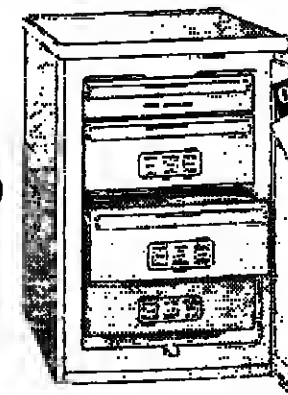
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international

Islanders angry as Britain gets tough

Andrew Marshall

A British initiative aimed at tightening control over Caribbean dependencies has brought an angry response from Anguilla, a tiny island in the Leeward Islands.

Its Prime Minister Hubert Hughes accused the Government of trying to force the five remaining dependencies into independence by removing the powers of local officials.

"There has been no discussion of this with me or with the Government of Anguilla," Mr Hughes said yesterday. The Government was making the same mistakes that it had made in other colonial possessions, and would antagonise the local population, he added.

"They have come straight at last and they are saying... 'You have one option, independence or secession'," he said in a letter which was circulated throughout the island.

His comments were in response to a letter the British Government sent its five Caribbean territories - Anguilla, Montserrat, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the British Virgin Islands - spelling out their relationship with Britain.

In response to a parliamentary question, Nicholas Bonsor, a foreign office minister, confirmed last month that the Government was resurrecting the threat of using reserve powers in the Caribbean. This means that the governors of the territories - with the agreement of the Foreign Secretary - could amend, veto or introduce legislation over the heads of the islands' existing legislatures.

The aim is to bring the financial legislation of the islands into line with practices in Britain. There have been repeated warnings over the past year about the threat from

money laundering in the islands. MI5's former top law official, David Bickford, warned a corruption conference in Cambridge that more than \$1 trillion was "generated by organised crime and laundered through offshore centres using secrecy laws".

Mr Hughes said that the real agenda was to "blackmail" the territories into independence. A section of the letter said that continued dependence relied on an extension of the reserve powers. He denied that money laundering was a factor, saying that Anguilla's legislation was the most modern and open in the region.

There has been increasing tension between Caribbean governors, who are appointed by the Queen, and the island populations.

Last year, the governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Martin Bourke, whom locals called an "arrogant autocrat", came under fire and some islanders asked for him to be replaced. They complained when he appeared to say the police were corrupt and the territory was a haven for drug traffickers.

When Alan Shave, the outgoing governor of Anguilla left last October, he spoke in a farewell radio broadcast of his "often thankless and confrontational task". His term had been marked by friction with the local government.

Britain's last serious tussle with Anguilla was in 1969, when islanders revolted over persistent attempts to integrate them with the neighbouring islands of St Kitts and Nevis. Army and police reinforcements were drafted in, and when St Kitts and Nevis became independent, Anguilla remained as a dependent. Since then there have been frequent clashes over the degree of autonomy accorded to the local administration.

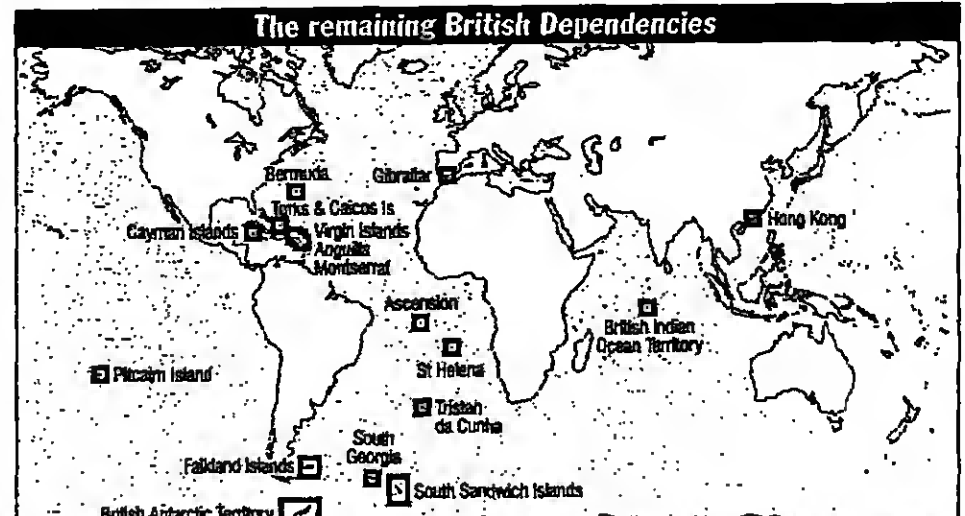


Colonial control: British paratroopers in Anguilla in 1969 (Popperfoto) and, right, the image of authority - in this case Lord Waddington, former Governor of Bermuda



All that's left of the world's greatest empire

Andrew Marshall



Once of enormous strategic importance, the remaining British dependencies are now just dots on the map. When Hong Kong goes, Bermuda will be the largest.

Almost all were wrested from the Spanish in the 18th century. But Gibraltar is no longer the key to the Mediterranean. The Caribbean's military relevance declined with the end of rivalry between Spain, France and Britain over the Americas. The South Atlantic routes around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope no longer require naval coaling stations. Pitcairn Island never had much significance beyond its role in the saga of HMS *Bounty*. Only Diego Garcia and Ascension Island still function as major military installations - for the US.

CARIBBEAN

Anguilla. Population: 7,000. Named by Spaniards, Anguilla

was settled by the British in the 17th century. BVI. Population: 13,000. Discovered by Columbus in 1493, the Virgin Islands were taken over in 1666 by the British.

Caymans. Population: 26,000. Discovered by Columbus in 1503, the islands were recognised as British in 1670. Montserrat. Population: 12,000. Discovered by Columbus in

1593, the islands were colonised by the British in the 17th century. Its 40 square miles were in the news last year because of fears that the island's volcano would erupt.

Turks and Caicos. Population: 13,000. Part of the great colonial tussle over the Caribbean; Britain, France and Spain finally settled the title to the islands in 1766 when Britain established a resident Agent.

SOUTH ATLANTIC

British Antarctic Territory. Population: About 300. Established in 1962 as a result of the Antarctic treaty, its 660,000 square miles are inhabited only by scientists and logistical staff.

Falklands. Population: 2,000. Discovered by either the British, French or Spanish (depending on whose version you believe), the islands were disputed by Britain and Spain, until Britain expelled the Argentinian-settlers in 1832. War returned 150 years later. St Helena and Dependencies. Population: 5,000. Used as a depot for food and water by the East India Company from 1659, it became a colony in 1834. With it go Ascension Is-

land and Tristan da Cunha. South Georgia and South Sandwich. Population: 0. Captain James Cook took possession in 1775. A whaling station and scientific base until its starring role in the 1982 Falklands War.

OTHER

Bermuda. Population: 59,000. Discovered by the Spaniards in the 16th century, the British settled the islands in 1609.

Gibraltar. Population: 30,000. Admiral Sir George Rooke took the Rock from Spain in 1704, and it was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Sovereignty continues to be disputed by Spain.

Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands. Population: 50. Discovered by Carteret in 1767, Pitcairn was settled by mutineers from HMS *Bounty*.

British Indian Ocean Territory. Population: 0. The mysterious Diego Garcia is now home to a huge American naval base and air facilities.

LEGS ARMS BACK STOMACH HEART & SOUL

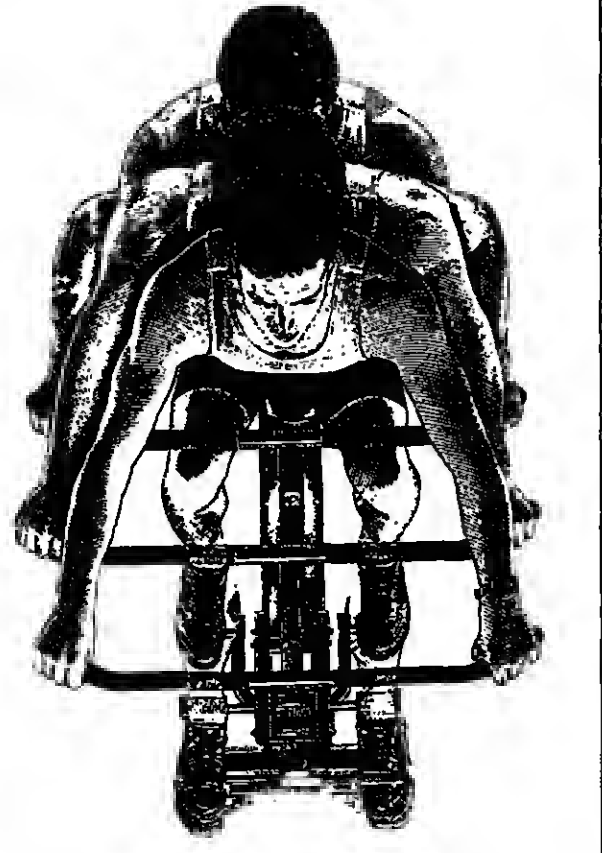
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Hostage dog breaks siege monotony

Phil Davison

Most of the television images you see come from there. Others come from a higher angle, the roof of a high-rise apartment block where the networks, including ITN, are paying \$1,500 (£900) a week for a position.

There, and on the ground, walkie-talkies crackle endlessly as news crews communicate and move their people around. Some have erected tents or tarpaulins amid a spaghetti of television cable. Others use mini-vans, with cameras or satellite dishes balanced on their roofs. One local television crew still has a nicely decorated Christmas tree outside its van. Banks of telephones have been set up, some of them on mobile trailers, giving phonecard vendors a brisk trade.

Portable green lavatory cubicles are shared by journalists, police, firemen and the curious tourists who come by to have their pictures taken against the wall of newscorpuses. After the ruins of Machupicchu, this has been perhaps Peru's favourite tourist attraction.

Favourite vehicles, ambulances and the lorries of police bomb-disposal experts are parked in nearby streets, and 1,000 or so heavily armed police and soldiers in flak jackets stand by. But there is no sign of the armoured vehicles which would probably be needed for an assault.

Wealthy or middle-class Peruvians, many housed in mock-Tudor villas, are still living in their homes within sight of the Japanese residence. They would presumably have to be evacuated if any raid were imminent.

To relieve the boredom, journalists exchange jokes about the Tupac Amaru guerrillas: "I thought Two-pack O'Mara was an Irishman who smokes 40 a day until I discovered Smirnoff."

Or, they add new lyrics to the tune of "YMCA", a song performed by the camp American pop group the Village People: "We're having fun with the MRTA..."

significant shorts

Clinton delays controversial Cuba law

President Bill Clinton once again delayed implementation of a law that would allow US citizens to sue some foreign companies doing business in Communist-ruled Cuba. He ordered a further six-month suspension of the provision of the so-called Helms-Burton law which, enacted in March, enraged Europeans, Canadians and Mexicans. Reuters - Washington

China ancient and modern

Archaeologists have found remains at the heart of Peking which show that people lived 20,000 years ago on the site where an office tower is to be built. A Chinese newspaper reported. The remains were discovered on 28 December at the construction site for the Oriental Plaza tower, near Tiananmen Square. AP - Peking

Civilian rule in Gambia

President Yahya Jammeh's party won a majority in Gambia's new parliament after elections that complete a return to civilian rule in the small West African nation, following his 1994 military coup. Reuters - Banjul

\$500,000 bomb settlement

Richard Jewell, the security guard who was the focus of the investigation into the Olympic bombing before he was cleared by the government, reached a settlement of more than \$500,000 from the NBC television network, the Wall Street Journal reported. AP - New York

Dramatic rise in Russian HIV figures

The number of people testing positive for HIV dramatically increased in Russia over the past year, officials said. The Health Ministry said 1,031 new cases have been registered in 1996. Of these, 802 people were intravenous drug users who became infected by sharing needles, it said. According to the report, carried by the Interfax news agency, 2,316 HIV cases, including 287 children, have been registered in the country since 1987. The number of people diagnosed as actually having AIDS, the last stage of the disease, stands at 248, including 102 children, it said. AP - Moscow

Beachcomber makes history

An Australian beachcomber has reignited debate about the nation's early history by unearthing an old silver coin said to have been dropped by a Portuguese mariner almost 500 years ago on the continent's south-east coast. The find, made in September but only publicised on Friday after initial checks of the coin's authenticity, is seen as perhaps the first tangible evidence to support a contentious theory that the Portuguese were the first to chart eastern Australia. Reuters - Melbourne

Italians lose their kick

Two Italian amateur football teams have been ordered to replay a match that ended prematurely when the players ran out of balls. All three balls available went missing during the game between the southern sides Ginestra and Ruvn after being kicked out of the ground. The referee had no alternative but to blow the whistle early. Reuters - Potenza



JEREMY WARNER

Tinta retreats

Matthew Horsman

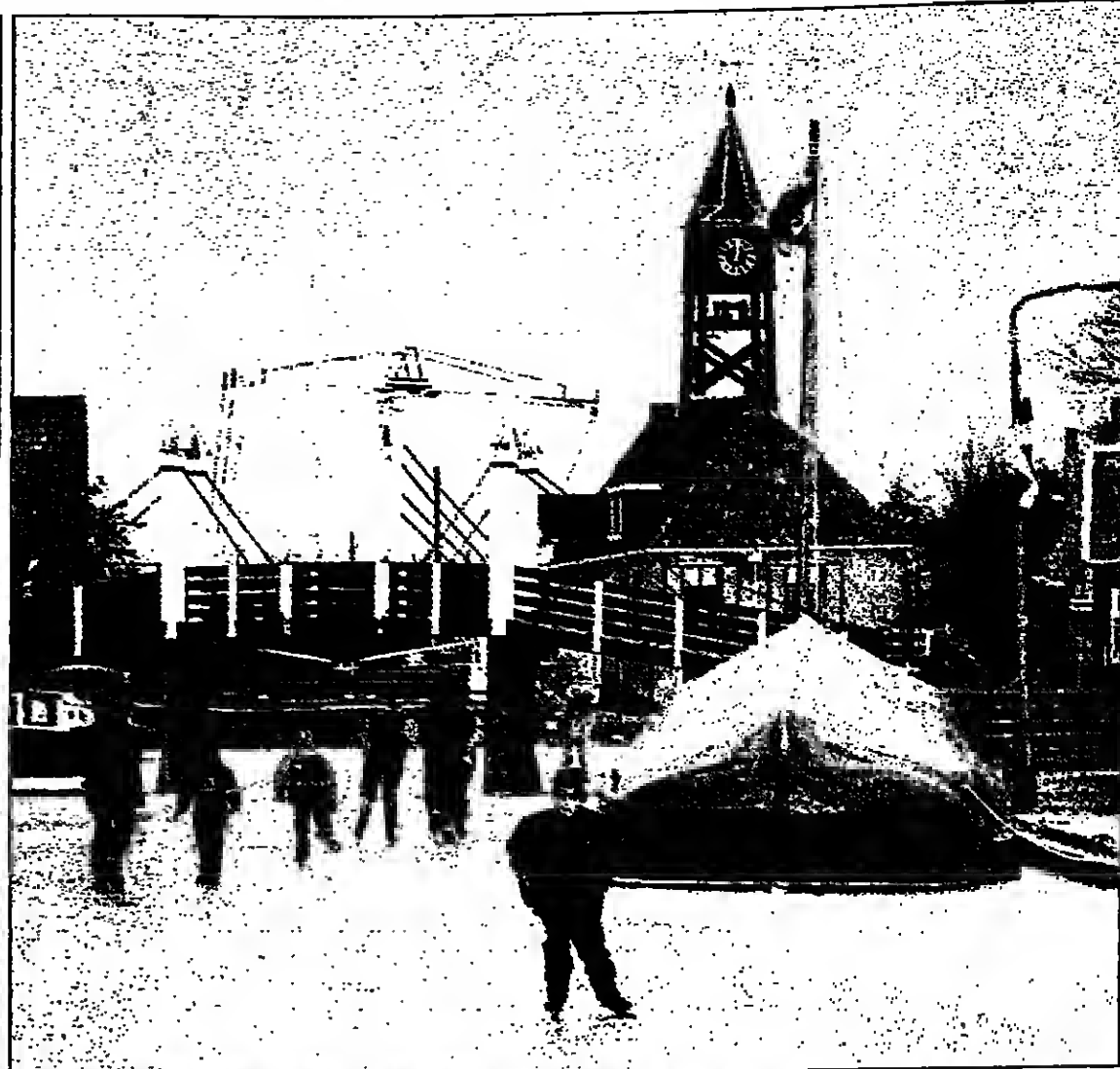
Likely

It looks like the Labour party is about to make a significant move in the House of Commons. The party's position is becoming increasingly clear as the election nears. The Labour party is likely to win a majority in the House of Commons. This is a significant victory for the party and its leader, Tony Blair. The Labour party has been in opposition for a long time, and this victory is a major step towards power. The Labour party's victory is a reflection of the people's desire for change. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about the changes that the people want. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of peace and prosperity for the United Kingdom. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of justice and equality for all. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of hope and optimism for the future. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of peace and prosperity for the United Kingdom. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of justice and equality for all. The Labour party is the only party that can bring about a new era of hope and optimism for the future.

صحنه من الاعمال

international

Rivers turn to ice in Europe's big chill



Winter chill: A passenger waiting for the Hamburg harbour ferry, Germany, while at Hindelopen in the Netherlands skaters take advantage of the frozen canals to practise for the 200km Eleven Towns tour Photographs: AP/Reuters

Agencies

Europe's great rivers are freezing as an icy winter takes its toll across the continent.

Since Monday, the Elbe has been closed to inland navigation from Hamburg almost to the Czech border. Ice is also building in the channel between the North and Baltic seas, closing Schleswig and other smaller harbours.

The Danube remained closed to all shipping traffic from Germany through Austria to Slovakia, and barges were stuck throughout the Benelux countries and Germany, with operators in northern Germany waiting for ice breakers to free their boats.

Barge traffic was halted in much of eastern France after parts of the Loire and key canals were sealed with four inches of ice. While the Rhine is still navigable from Rotterdam to Basel, the freeze has hit

tributaries and nearby canals.

In Britain, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, the Thames froze at Marlow in Buckinghamshire, 25 miles west of London. Bookmaker William Hill said people were placing bets on whether the river would freeze over in central London.

Temperatures in northern continental Europe and eastern England were around -10C yesterday. It was warmer in Greenland than it was in much of Europe. In the capital, Nuuk, it was 1C; a day earlier, it was a springlike 13C.

The freeze has taken a grim toll, claiming the lives of 200 people, many of them homeless or old. In Romania, a Bucharest morgue was overflowing after more than 50 people died of cold. The director said cemeteries were refusing to bury the dead because the ground remained frozen. Most of those who had frozen to death were ill, poor and malnourished, with no identity papers.



In Germany, Bonn's gravediggers

complained that they were having to use pneumatic drills to get through up to 50 centimetres of frozen earth. To make matters worse, many cemeteries had more burials than usual to cope with because of a post-

holiday backlog.

Leipzig's gravediggers used a more traditional method, applying a layer of glowing coals for six to eight hours to thaw the frozen earth underneath.

A Dutchman and a German lost their lives in separate skiing accidents

in Switzerland on Thursday, Swiss officials said. The country is suffering the coldest temperatures since 1987 and is set to get a fresh layer of snow today.

In Poland, a nearly two-week spell of Arctic cold has killed at least 40 people, often either elderly and living alone or people who froze to death while drunk.

In the Russian Caucasus emergency workers were battling strong winds, blizzards and fog to clear snowdrifts that have blocked travellers in a mountain road tunnel for a week. The Emergency Ministry in Moscow said some 30 or so drivers remained blocked in the Roksky tunnel, which links Russia with Georgia through the 10,000-foot Roksky Pass and which has been cut off by avalanches.

In the Netherlands, even the penguins were freezing. An Amsterdam zoo moved its younger blackfoot penguins – a species na-

tive to coastal South Africa – out of the -5C outdoors and into a cooler where the temperature can be kept at a constant 5C.

Oyster farmers, meanwhile, are worried their produce could freeze to death on the way to market. And in Belgium a lorry driver trapped by some of the coldest weather in years ended up making a vast chocolate fondue after trying to unfreeze his fuel tank with a blow torch. Police said the diesel fuel caught fire, melting tonnes of Belgian chocolates which the lorry was carrying.

There are some compensations. In the Netherlands, the big chill was being cheered for producing ice thick enough to run a cross-country skating race that has not been held since 1986. About 1 million shivering spectators were expected to line canal and river banks for today's Eleven Towns tour, which starts and finishes in the northern Dutch city of Leeuwarden.



Weatherman Dutchman Joop Puijen braves the big chill Photograph: Reuters

France's high-speed trains meet wrong kind of snow

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

More than 30 high-speed trains and thousands of cars were stranded in south-eastern France yesterday after heavy snowfalls and exceptionally low temperatures brought the whole region to a freezing halt. The situation was described by France's usually sanguine emergency services in terms of "chaos" and "crisis", a coach passenger trapped on a paralysed motorway said the scene resembled "something out of a disaster movie". "It's Siberia!" was one newspaper headline.

Several thousand people had to spend the night in their vehicles, and two elderly German coach passengers suffered heart attacks and died while their coaches were caught in the mêlée. Emergency shelters were opened in school gymnasiums and community halls to accommodate those immobilised by the weather, while the Red Cross, local authorities

and even private individuals provided food.

As rescue services tried yesterday, mostly in vain, to dislodge the blocked vehicles, drivers across the country were advised by road safety authorities not to leave without chains for their tyres. Anyone planning to travel south of Lyon by any form of transport at all was told in no uncertain terms not even to try.

The already difficult situation in the south-east, especially in the Rhône Valley, which generally enjoys a mild climate, had been aggravated over Thursday night after black ice on the A7 caused scores of accidents. Heavy lorries and coaches littered the three-lane motorway, and with jams extending for 10km and more, this main north-south artery was eventually closed between Lyon and Avignon.

The main alternative motorway from Paris to the south, the A75 across the Massif Central, was also impassable because of

heavy snow south of Clermont Ferrand.

The high-speed trains, which usually cover the 750km distance between Paris and Marseille in less than five hours, was crippled south of Lyon on Thursday afternoon, when ice neutralised electric contacts beneath the track and points froze. Unlike cold-climate countries like Canada and Russia, France does not have permanent track de-icing mechanisms, relying instead on de-icing wagons sent ahead of a train when conditions require.

The state railway company, SNCF, which has been mounting an elaborate charm offensive to win back passengers deterred by last year's six-week strike, came in for ferocious criticism from passengers who had found themselves stuck in the middle of nowhere without any information or assistance. SNCF was accused of doing nothing to provide alternative accommodation: 10,000 people

spent the night in railway carriages.

Air traffic was also affected, with many provincial airports closed, especially in central and southern France.

All canals were frozen; even part of the Loire was iced over between Angers and Nantes, trapping dozens of barges. Only on the Riviera and a small ribbon of the Mediterranean plain did temperatures rise even fractionally above zero.

In Paris, where there has been little snow but freezing temperatures for more than a week, the authorities launched a new campaign to persuade those sleeping rough to use emergency shelters set up after two people died over Christmas. President Chirac added his voice, telling ministers at the first cabinet meeting after the holiday that the "problem of the homeless and their dogs" needed to be solved. Many of those sleeping rough say they will not use hostels because they cannot take their dogs with them.

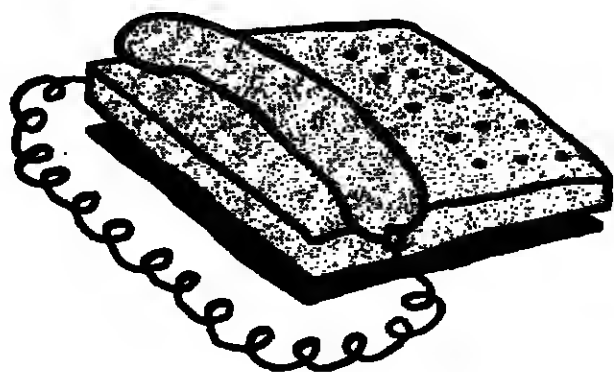
... meanwhile in England, Thames birds are frozen out



Snowbirds: Swans and ducks walking on the frozen River Thames yesterday at Marlow, Buckinghamshire; hundreds of swans, suffering from hypothermia, have had to be rescued from the sub-zero temperatures Photograph: PA

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صكنا من الالهي



Hold the epitaphs, John Major's story isn't over

Blue-jacketed, with a forward-looking title, a happy picture of John Major and only a shade under £7 to you, the latest collection of the Prime Minister's speeches is being sold as a guide to his convictions and principles. "Our Nation's Future" is a pre-election offering for the thinking Tory voter and it comes just ahead of a rare Prime Ministerial press conference next week, signalling the start of a winter-into-spring campaign. But despite its title and virtues, this collection of Major's rhetoric has, inevitably, a slightly elegiac air: too many opinion polls for too long have shown him far behind for most voters to think he still has a chance.

But does he? And should he? What, in the end, does this collection of the Prime Minister's thinking add up to?

The dominant tone of the speeches needs some oxymoronic phrase to capture it - passionate caution, or rhetorical pragmatism. This is not to sneer; they amount to a determined statement about the values, the significance and the achievements of the 19th British Prime Minister this century. Major himself spins us a valiant tale of his time in office. As he tells it, our Prime Minister has been a plucky, if not showy, defender of British interests. Replace the haggard-looking British Bulldog with a loyal, tenacious terrier

and you get the picture. Gone is the grandiose appeal to a glorious battle-scarred past, deployed by Margaret Thatcher in her time. In its place is a quieter, calmer conservatism - but no less nostalgic, and no less determined.

In this most positive and generous interpretation of the life and times of John Major, he has been far-sighted about the threats facing the nation. As he repeats time and again in speeches, John Major is "deeply committed to defending our nation, our heritage, our freedoms, and our constitution and institutions shaped and developed over the centuries - against threats from outside or from inside". Well, that depends, of course, on the threats.

Yet there is some truth in this flattering self-portrait. On monetary union in Europe, or Scottish devolution, or new rights for employees, the Prime Minister has indeed fought fiercely to resist radical change. But his resistance smacks too often of lack of imagination, and an inability to seize opportunities and lead the nation forwards, rather than the balanced defence of the nation's best interests. Consider Europe. When Chancellor, John Major was one of the first to be uneasy about European currency union. But the trouble is that he behaved far more like the perfect establishment civil servant than the political



leader. He carefully listed the practical obstacles to change and, when his "hard euro" idea for a parallel currency was brushed aside, he largely confined himself to disapproving throat-clearing on the sidelines. On this, his epitaph might read: "far-sighted but politically ineffectual".

On the domestic front, Mr Major has been the true traditional conservative that Margaret Thatcher never was. With great persistence he has repeated his refrain about a "classless society". The ordinary boy from Brixton made good says, "I want people to get on... I do want children to get above themselves." But John Major won't be remembered as the Prime Minister who created radical new opportunities for the people at the bottom to rise up and thrive. He has not been a passionate builder of ladders. What he really means is that ordinary people should be able to do it for themselves, if they can. Conservatives have said the same throughout the century.

His view of the British Union is similarly conventional and conservative. Faced with the possibility of negotiating peace in Northern Ireland, he worked hard and honestly - but he also failed to make the positive leap of faith last year that could have pushed talks forward. The prospect of devolution in Scotland, or

passing power downwards towards local government is, it seems, inconceivable to him. In these regards he is as centralist and statist as anyone.

Voters in search of leadership, and historians in search of significance, may well shake their heads and move on. But we shouldn't underestimate John Major's personality. Just because he hasn't been radical doesn't mean he has failed to achieve anything - in his own terms at least. It is incredibly difficult to stand still when all about you are losing their heads - and at times, their dignity, their discretion and their direction.

Holding the country steady may not be much to boast about, but holding the Conservative Party steady (or at least together) is an astonishing feat these days - and too much for a nice man. Whatever else history's verdict on John Major, on his speeches and on his politics, it should not be that he was a nice, wet, grey man. He is an agile, cold, and ruthless politician, who has so far succeeded at one of the most difficult tasks of all - staying in power. And that, after all, is what the next few months will all be about. He may not have made a huge impact on the country, but his influence on the political story of Britain isn't over yet. The epitaphs are premature.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Building trust between Labour leadership and the grassroots

Sir: Your report ("Labour at odds over power to make policy", 2 January) that *Tribune* is planning to publish proposals aimed at establishing a relationship of trust between Labour's grassroots and a Blair government comes as welcome news. The breakdown in trust between the last Labour government and Labour activists not only helped Mrs Thatcher win in 1979 but also left a legacy of bitterness which came very close to destroying Labour in the early 1980s. Avoiding a repetition of this should be a priority for everyone in New Labour.

The key lies in empowering individual party members and giving them a stake in a Labour government. One member, one vote (OMOV) was a step in the right direction and so, too, was the Road to the Manifesto ballot, but this trend needs to be taken much further. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee's proposals include: a

members' charter setting out what rights and levels of service individual party members should be entitled to; much greater direct contact with individual members through question-and-answer sessions with Labour cabinet ministers; wider use of the Internet; a much greater emphasis on political education through the establishment of a University of Labour; the extension of OMOV to elections for constituency officers, party conference delegates and council candidates; and a reformed NEC which is more representative of grassroots members.

New Labour's own internal democracy should prefigure the democratic renewal which a Blair government will embark upon for Britain.

Local parties should remain the central organisations within New Labour but they should be open participatory bodies not hierarchical

bureaucracy-driven federations. That means getting rid of traditional General Committees, and instead putting the emphasis on local ward branches, all-members meetings, local campaigning, community regeneration, political discussion and political education.

The LCC's proposals do not claim to be the final word on party reform. The more proposals there are for giving party members a stake in a New Labour government the better - which is why *Tribune*'s reported initiative is to be welcomed.

BEN LUCAS
Chair, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee
London, SE24

Sir: The proposals by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee are as confused as they are untimely.

To put local party democracy in the hands of a few elected activists is the antithesis of the mass party that

Labour has successfully built in recent years, increasing participatory democracy at the expense of representative democracy.

The only willing representatives under the LCC proposals would be the same old activists, and in particular, aspirant politicians.

One of the strengths of Labour's local organisation, which far surpasses that of any other British political party, is that important functional positions are often filled by those who do not seek to be representatives. The reliable secretary, the diligent treasurer and the unbiased chair are the unsung heroes who are often unlikely to put themselves forward in postal ballots against aspirant politicians.

This proposal would return Labour Party democracy back to the bad old days of the early 1980s.

JOANNA WHITE
Ballock, Herefordshire

Patten shuns China's assembly

Sir: Neville Maxwell often goes to extraordinary lengths as an apologist for Peking. But his attempt to blame Governor Patten for China's decision to dismantle Hong Kong's democratically elected Legislative Council surely takes the biscuit. (Letter, 30 December).

The fact is that China is replacing a body elected in Hong Kong by over a million people in September 1995 by one selected over the border by just 400 friends of China. And of the 60 people picked in this way, 51 were chosen from among those making the selection. And why is China doing this? Because it wants to reduce the number of Democrats in LegCo. It is like abolishing the House of Commons, replacing the electorate with a group of hand-picked rich and famous people voting for themselves, and holding the selection in France. And yet Mr Maxwell has the gall to accuse Mr Patten of gerrymandering.

International lawyer, including a distinguished group of lawyers testifying to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee in 1994, has found the electoral arrangements for the 1995 LegCo elections to be in line with both the Joint Declaration and Basic Law. You won't find them queuing up to defend China's recent efforts. The International Commission of Jurists has denounced the "provisional legislature", and China has conspicuously failed to accept Britain's invitation to go to the International Court of Justice for a ruling on the matter. It is not hard to see why.

The establishment of the "provisional legislature" is a wholly unnecessary and foolish step for China to take. The Hong Kong government will have nothing to do with this body, and will continue to work with Hong Kong's only legitimate legislature - that elected in record numbers by the people of Hong Kong just 15 months ago.

KERRY MCGLYNN
Information Co-ordinator
Government House
Hong Kong

Sir: Governor Chris Patten's attempts to broaden the democratic base failed completely in so much as there will shortly be no popularly elected representation at all. They also caused a deterioration in Sino-British relations and encouraged Peking's latest, at times even paranoid, suspicions that somehow we scheme to extend British influence beyond 1997.

It is, however, unfair to call these reforms a gerrymander to "strengthen the electoral chances of the anti-Peking party". They were instead maladroitness and ill-advised, as indeed is Mr Patten's description of Peking's appointment of an interim chamber for Hong Kong as "stomach turning".

Former governors of Hong Kong, undemocratic by appointment and in practice, never spoke of the Chinese government in such undignified terms.

There is every sign that China will adhere to the "one country, two systems" principle originally announced by Deng Xiaoping. It is very much in China's interest to maintain a prosperous and stable Hong Kong and the bulk of the population accepts this. One thing is sure: outside attention will have little bearing on how China acts in her newly resumed territory.

IAN RAE
Drinkstone, Suffolk

Sir: You list as candidates to take over from Major after the last election the names of Dorrell, Howard, Rifkind, Redwood, Portillo and Shepherd. Really? The Lord help us... unless your profile of Patten in the same issue (3 January) suggests there is a sane alternative.

RICHARD WOODS
North Lopham, Norfolk

LETTER from THE EDITOR

In a general way, I am in favour of families. I came from one. Since then, I have myself gone into the family thing, more or less voluntarily. See me in the park on a Saturday morning, bleary-eyed, implausibly dressed and surrounded by shrilly hectoring midgets and you'd say, "Now then, there is a Family Man."

So the politicians who boldly proclaim themselves to be standing up for the family - most recently, in a pamphlet published this morning, the Prime Minister - are presumably hiding for my vote. Mr Major talks of his "strong belief in the fundamental importance of the family and our national institutions" and his determination to protect the family's rights and responsibilities from "the incursions of the faceless state". And my question is - why is this sort of talk not reassuring and pleasant, but merely infuriating?

It is partly the politics-speak - the implication that Britain is seething with people plotting to dismantle our historic native families and ship off the wretched huddled fragments to state collective nurseries, or people who think there is a strong case to be made for the "faceless state" (a different state, presumably, to the smiley one which Mr Major leads).

Mainly, though, the problem with "family" rhetoric is that it implies that families are a source of uncomplicated good and that individuals within them need no further protection or intervention - leave the family alone and everything will be fine. Who believes that? We all know that families are also places where child abuse, neglect and horrible cruelty can occur. We all know that there are bad parents as well as good parents, and that both kinds can Larkin-you-up.

Mostly, the state intervenes where it does because not intervening would bring fury and protests from individuals and newspapers, including this one.

Terry Major-Ball's brother knows this perfectly well - he is posing as a libertarian anti-statist to cheer up some right-wing journalists, but in fact he heads a highly interventionist government (what is the Child Support Agency but the face-

less state, and quite right, too). To say you want the state to keep away in order to protect the family is like being pro-air and therefore against state interference against polluters, or pro-housing, and therefore against housing regulations. It being election year, we have purchased a battery-operated office hoover-counter. And this registers, I'm afraid to say, heavily as Serious Tepid Hoovey.

I am still having difficulty with some readers who fail to distinguish between the role of columnists and the position of the newspaper. Why do I

The problem with family rhetoric is that it implies that families are a source of uncomplicated good. Who believes that?

"allow" Polly Toynbee to berate this, or John Lytle to glorify that? The law and reasonable standards of taste and fairness apart, "allow" has nothing to do with it - our columnists are employed to be themselves and to provoke argument or agreement, not to act as glove-puppets for the editor or proprietor. (A fetching array of such puppets, nicely tricked out with bow-ties and detachable facial hair, can be purchased elsewhere, through your usual newsagent.) Here, the opinion and column slots are, or ought to be, like a free-ranging conversation in a bar or at a good supper party. They are a zig-zagging argument, not the line. If anyone still doubts this, they should reflect on the series of articles against constitutional reform by Richard D North that we have carried this week. The final one is on page 12 of today's paper. They are well-written and compelling. I'm proud we used them; and I disagreed with every word.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

The Tory party emphasises personal morality because it wishes to resist the economic and political changes that threaten the privileged position of its supporters - The Rt Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford

It is the latest in a series of party political pronouncements from the Church of England - Ann Widdecombe, Home Office minister, responding

Blair? Like Gainskell. High-minded. Not my cup of tea - A L Rowe, 94, historian, who became a Companion of Honour in the New Year Honours

Let us be thankful that Marianne Faithfull resisted any attempts Mr Major may have made to lend respectability to his shameful honours list by making her a dame - Auberon Waugh

A general election will be held in Britain no later than May. The country must reach a clear decision on its European policy. Britain belongs to Europe. Europe needs Britain - Klaus Kinkel, German Foreign Minister

Some parents shown the video were previously convinced their children were elsewhere at night. In one case two girls at the centre of a disturbance were thought to be attending dancing classes - Inspector Tony Green, who has cut crime by showing parents in Woodhouse, near Sheffield, videos of their children offending

EU dictatorship doomed to fail

Sir: Guy Keleny ("The Euro-sceptic lie about why we fought Hitler", 2 January) raises his own bogey in order to knock it down. No one seriously suggests that Helmut Kohl is another Hitler. What he does represent is a continuing German drive to dominate Europe, and British foreign policy has always successfully resisted attempts by any one power to exercise hegemony over the Continent: against Spain in the 16th century, France in the 17th-19th centuries, and Germany in the 20th century.

Like many Europhiles, Keleny confuses the EU with Europe. The EU is merely an economic and political construct imposed upon half of Europe by officials. It is doomed to perish because it is undemocratic, economically inefficient, and increasingly remote from the needs and concerns of most people. In the words of that wise European, the late Karl Popper, it is a "Jacobin dictatorship that cannot work and will not work".

The absurdity of attempting to yoke together Scots and Sicilians, Swedes and Spaniards is self-evident. The ghastly example of former Yugoslavia is too recent a memory of what happens when politicians try to federate disparate peoples divided by religion, culture and language into an entirely bogus and artificial union, especially when one of those peoples (Serbs/Germans) has demonstrated a historical tendency to bully and boss its neighbours.

I write not as a Europhile, but as a repentant Europhile reluctantly converted to EU-scepticism by the sobering experience of spending six years in two EU countries. Far from being a xenophobic nationalist, my two children are respectively half-French and half-Austrian. However, of the options on offer, I have sadly concluded that the nation state remains the most practical and



Hitler and Kohl: the political face has changed, but the German drive to dominate Europe continues

democratic way of ordering our political future.
NIGEL JONES
Brighton, East Sussex

Sir: Guy Keleny misunderstands the motives of Euro-sceptics. Being a Euro-sceptic doesn't just involve protecting British sovereignty, although that forms a large part of the argument.

There are three possible outcomes for monetary union: the whole of the EU goes ahead with the project, which will bring an economic depression to Europe (and the UK); continental Europe goes ahead and the UK doesn't, which will still cause a depression on the Continent, but our economy should be able to survive successfully; the third and ideal outcome is if the whole project is abandoned, which will allow Europe's economies to experience reasonable economic growth for the first time this decade.

The UK has a definite interest in Europe's affairs - for which we



Hitler and Kohl: the political face has changed, but the German drive to dominate Europe continues

should still be part of Europe. Besides a desire to avoid conflicts such as Mr Keleny described ever being repeated, a significant amount of British trade depends upon the economic performance of our European partners. For these reasons Britain should still maintain a degree of influence in European affairs, as it has done in the 18th and 19th centuries - and I believe Mr Keleny misjudges the Euro-sceptics in thinking they do not want this.

BEN DAVIS
London NW3

Sir: When Britain and the other European powers were the only world powers, this country's principal foreign policy objective was the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe by throwing its weight against whatever power threatened to attain overwhelming superiority.

Today the European powers have lost their role as guiding forces in world affairs. In future only by pooling our sovereignty can we hope



Hitler and Kohl: the political face has changed, but the German drive to dominate Europe continues

to maintain our influence in the world. This has to be the ultimate purpose of the European Union.
P MURTAGH
London SW16

Sir: You reported ("Goldsmith party is scorned as amateur", 1 January) that John Bostock has left his job with the Referendum Party. Mr Bostock was only a consultant and not a full-time member of the Referendum Party. It was the party that decided not to renew Mr Bostock's consultancy agreement. He was notified in writing of this decision on 4 December last year. You also reported Mr Bostock's affirmation that the Referendum Party would find it impossible to field candidates in up to 500 seats at the next election. This is untrue: 530 prospective parliamentary candidates have already been appointed.

MALCOLM GLENN
Managing Director
The Referendum Party
London SW1

Drink-drivers suddenly get safer

Sir: The Association of Chief Police Officers expresses disappointment that the number of people caught driving while over the alcohol limit in England and Wales over Christmas increased by 18 per cent (report, 3 January). Yet, and despite very bad weather, the number of alcohol-related accidents during this period increased by only 4 per cent.

Should we not rejoice that the inebriate minority of drivers have, in

the course of a single year, learned to drive so much more carefully? Indeed, think of the decrease in the number of accidents which might be expected were the sober majority of drivers to improve their driving in like measure.

Or is there something the police statisticians have not told us?
DR SIDNEY ALFORD
Corsham, Wiltshire

Hard work for Christmas volunteers

Sir: Crisis certainly does not wish to snub any of its volunteers (letter, 31 December) and indeed values their support enormously. We could not run any of our services without them.

Crisis was quoted in the article which prompted the letter (23 December) as noting that volunteers need to have realistic expectations of what the work involves. This we stand by - volunteering can be hard work, physically and emotionally. New volunteers must be aware of this for their sake as much as for our clients' sakes. However, we certainly don't

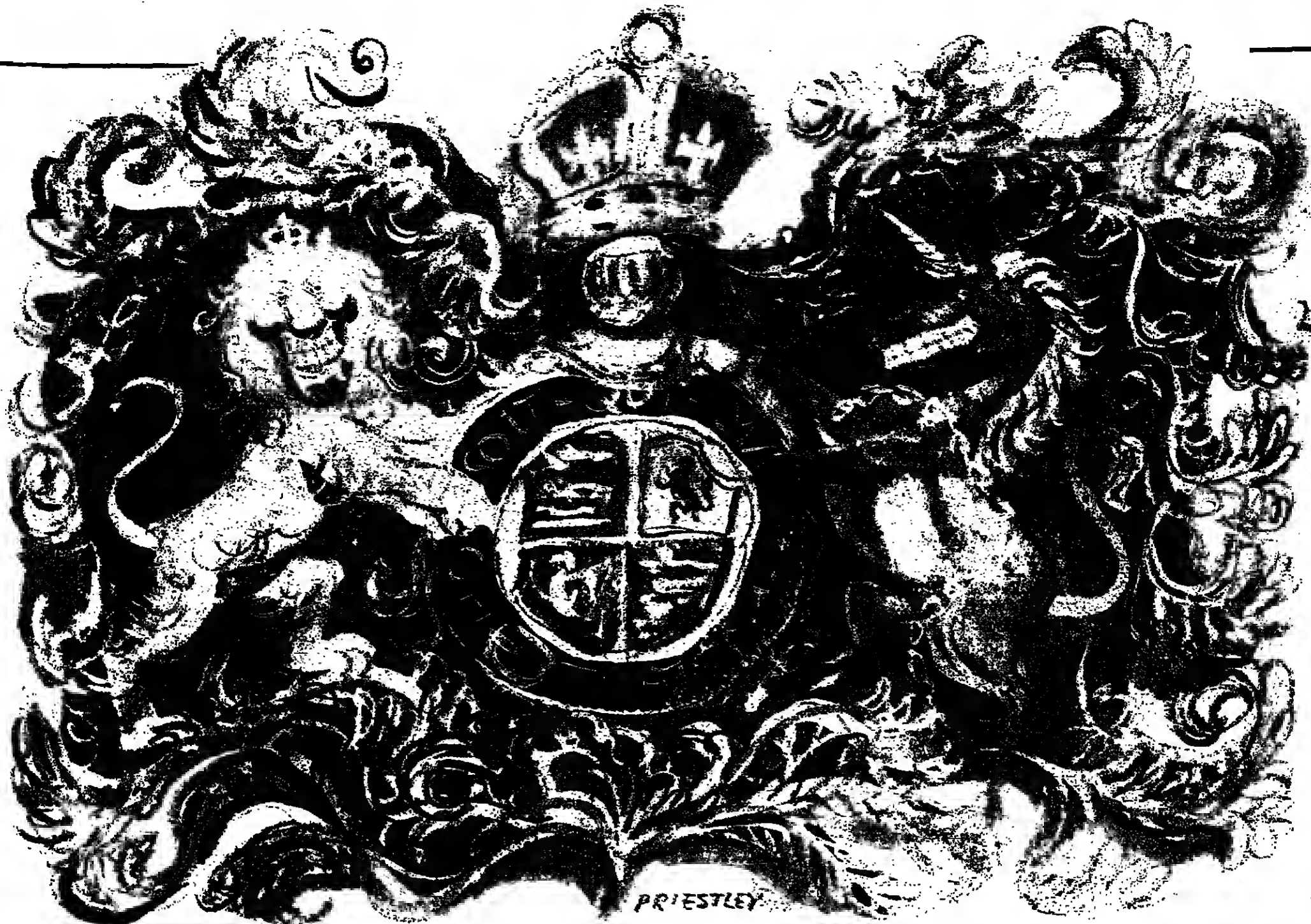
question people's motives for volunteering. Nor do we ask for a lifetime's commitment.

I hope potential volunteers have not been put off. Volunteering can be hugely rewarding for all concerned and is often more vital than money in enabling a service to go ahead.

BERRY RANCE
Head of Project Development
Crisis
London E1

essay

Concluding his series on the constitution, Richard D North defends our imperfect version of democracy and exposes the myth of a centralised Britain in the grip of the ruling class



It's baroque, but don't fix it

Of course it's not government by the people. The genius of a democracy is to let everyone in a society feel that they have control, or at least influence, while at the same time sparing them the effort of exercising much of either most of the time. It is the second part of this proposition which makes one doubt the modern enthusiasm for quoting de Tocqueville quite so much. The French political writer admired American small town administration, especially the right of and need for everyone to take part. "Without local institutions a nation may give itself a free government, but it has not got the spirit of liberty."

As it happens, the people as a whole are neither especially wise nor very nice, and these deficiencies make an even better case for undemocratic processes. Democratic institutions are seldom in fact very democratic, but they produce outcomes which are cleverer and

kinder than pure democracy would achieve, and most of us know it. It is also true that the "state" may be kinder than the community; the cosmopolitan centre more amiable than the repressive neighbourhood.

For proof of these propositions, consider only that most people most of the time think that murderers should swing by their necks, and that we should keep our hands in our pockets when we pass the poor in the street. It is our parliamentarians who dictate that capital punishment is immoral and ineffective, and who endlessly parade their intention to take less tax from us, but find their corporate compassion never quite allows them to do so.

All the same, it is right that people should constantly check that those who have power are in some sense accountable. On the whole, we believe that this is best achieved by what the Roman Catholic Church and the EU call "subsidiarity": the principle that decisions should

be taken as near as possible to those they affect.

Periodically, enthusiasts argue that Scotland and Wales (and, rather differently, Northern Ireland) ought to be allowed more independence. Many English people would feel that they were welcome to it, especially if their influence, and charge, upon Westminster were proportionally reduced. Why not? We have already had the best of their mineral resources, and will continue to attract their best brains, however they govern themselves. But many Britons are happy enough with the arrangement as it stands: as Ralf Dahrendorf says, we rather like "the beautiful absurdity of 'home international' football games".

It is axiomatic that Mrs Thatcher destroyed local government and centralised power. It is also wrong. Even if it were true, it might not matter. Local government is mostly about boring things such

as drains and dustbins; firms are doing much of it pretty well. Where local authorities run interesting things, such as police forces and schools, there would be a massive outcry if standards were to vary around the country.

Mrs Thatcher's attempted revolution in local government was one of her many failures, not in the sense that it was a disaster, but that it was aborted. The poll tax, for instance, could have ushered in a system whereby local people raised local taxes for local services with a potential for a high degree of autonomy. One of her reforms looks like being a small success: the little-noticed but emerging system whereby a tier of local government is stripped out of the system may revitalise local democracy by allowing people to vote less, but for clear purpose. The reform overcomes voter fatigue, rather than creating a dangerous democratic deficit.

But the main thrust of the argument that Mrs Thatcher was a centraliser is wrong. There is very little power in the UK for anyone to centralise. You can look where you like and you find civil servants and politicians trying very hard to discern and then deliver what the voter wants, and to do it cheaply.

It is right that the only passion we should allow civil servants is for disinterestedness,

which is not under half so much threat as is the anonymity that they need in order to preserve it.

You find people scrutinised and disciplined by (and here is a partial list): the *Today* programme, the rest of the energetic media, (the quite new) Commons select committees, the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission, judicial review, increasingly nosy and bossy judges (whom we should watch), occasional judicial inquiries, assiduous single-issue campaigners, vainglorious academics. And on top of all this we now face the biggest and loosest cannon ever to be mounted on to the deck of the ship of state: the threat of litigation.

People fear that Parliament cannot scrutinise the apparatus of the state it has sanctified. Why should it, with this army of spongers? Given the modern excess of scrutiny, the ease of exacting retribution and the hunger for very visible redress, it is a miracle that anything good – but no miracle that little that is very bad – is achieved by the body politic.

It is true that by putting out much of government to tender, and setting up agencies of one sort or another, we have made the lines of accountability hard to follow, as we have seen this year in the case of the Prison

Service. But if there are many more slip-ups of that sort, ministers will be forced to delineate the chain of command better, and the result should be a pretty effective improvement of a worthwhile reform.

It is a persistent myth that Britain is ruled not merely centrally, but by something called the Establishment. How this squares with the idea, also current, that Britain's ruling class (whatever that is) is as ignorant as it is distrustful of the commercial class, is anyone's guess. As is the problem of how it comes about that academia has little to do with either. There clearly is no ruling class, and the quangoocracy especially should appeal to anyone who wants Britain to be classless; its chiefs are overwhelmingly provincial, grammar school and red-brick university types.

There were, of course, fears that the agencies lack a real sense of public service. But who can listen to the chiefs of the schools or the prisons inspecting services without noting that they are free of institutionalised bunting than conventional civil service institutions would have been? Isn't that exactly what we wanted to see? The revised Citizen's Charter and league tables reveal to us regularly what we know already as people who use them: schools and hospitals are doing very well,

considering how reluctant we are to fund them.

In any case, what is so often missed is that accountability lies like flotsam and jetsam all around the shores of the new Archipelago State, and most of us can't be bothered to pick it up. Schools and hospitals now really do make themselves open to customer influence, and, like most ministries, conduct long and serious exercises in public consultation. Most of us feel that little is wrong, so we let others play our part for us.

Much the same case applies to information. As it does to accountability. The Americans are better informed by their government on a huge range of irrelevancies than are the British, but no one seriously believes that America's is a better run or more open government. Most other European societies are run by closed elites. But then their peoples are schooled in being citizens of a state, whilst we luxuriate as subjects of the Crown.

Where in the world does the Cabinet parade before the discerning classes at length every morning? Where in the world do senior civil servants delight to inform sensible journalists of every problem their political masters face? Or consider, too briefly, rights: do the British feel they have fewer rights

because these have not been crammed on to a page of A4? Do they not sense that it is a bad justice system that destroys rights, rather than a piece of paper that might defend them?

The truth about the British constitutional system is that there are things we perhaps don't like about it that might be put right, but with probably largely disappointing results. Constitutions do not create the vigour in society, though they may play their part in repressing it. They certainly don't make a people energetic or entrepreneurial. The most one can hope is that a government reflects its people's temper. This is where one might make a case for reform: not that it will make our economy or government more efficient, but that we may be failing culturally because we are in thrall to our past, and thus need to throw over its trappings. In fact, it is more likely that as modernity sweeps through our culture like a gale, we would be wise to cling to such bits of the wreckage that provide us with comfort. The failings of modern British government lie much more with the alternating indolence and graspingness of voters and the vulgarity of its media, than they do with the constitutional system or even the people managing it. To pervert Disney slightly: the constitution is Baroque, but there's no need to fix it.

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Thank Gawd all this new year stuff is over for another 12 months. Miserable old goat I may be, but I cannot stand all the forced, cheery, gang piss-up that is New Year's Eve. Why anyone wants to go to Trafalgar Square to be crushed by a beery mob of semi-comatose droozies who don't know each other, I cannot imagine. I didn't even want to do it when I was young, to those of you who are thinking that I'm just an ageing old trout who doesn't know how to enjoy herself. A friend of mine whose mate worked in a club on New Year's Eve said the whole night was just one long ruck, with fists flying in the testosterone-heavy air and regular police raids. Oh boys, you are such joy when you've had a few.

Many people assume, I think, that if you're on the telly, you are immune to the monthlongs of abuse you get from time to time. Not so. Over Christmas, I was with some of my family on my way to see my grandma, when I was assailed with a mouthful of very unpleasant obscenities from some teenage boys at the wispy

chin stage of development. And, yes, I was hurt by it, especially as I tend to think I'm immune when I'm with the family. I would like to thank my mum and my grandma, who both took off at separate times in the direction of the abuse like a glorious pair of raging Valkyries to sort the offenders out. I wish I had my own New Year's Honours List to reward them appropriately.

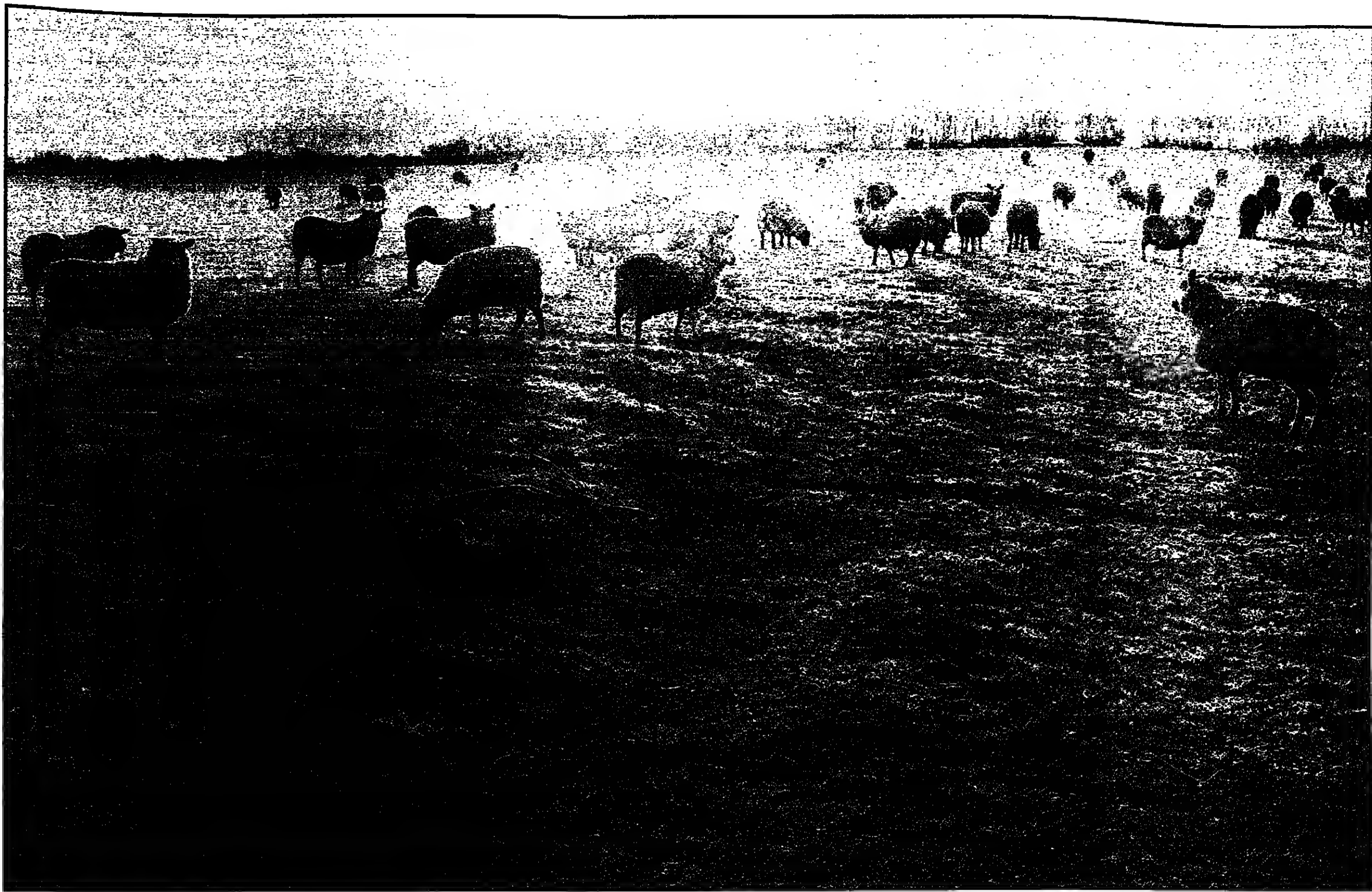
Who on earth would go and see a film about the life of Fred West and the terrible crimes he committed? The answer, probably, is millions, and that is why the production company who wanted to make this film suggested it – because it would have made them lots of money. Everyone would have pretended to be outraged, but loads of people would have trundled along to see it. We have to accept, I think, that a section of the population is absolutely riveted by the whole Fred West affair, or one would certainly think so from the way the tabloids were flooded with every possible angle. The film, though, has now been

scrapped, so the mob that would have gone to see it will just have to put up with watching fictional violence and sexual crimes against those too vulnerable to defend themselves. Still, there are plenty of such films to choose from coming out of Hollywood.

John McCarthy would like to have a "one to one" with Yuri Gagarin, the Russian cosmonaut with whom he obviously feels he has something in common, given the claustrophobic conditions they have both experienced. I can understand Mr McCarthy wants to share his suffering with an individual who might have been able to identify with him. However, this is all within the context

of an advert for some cellular phone network, for which Mr McCarthy is no doubt being paid a fair old whack. I reserve judgement to some extent; for all we know he might be giving the money to charity. Or is he just another who has cheapened his experiences for the sake of some cash? I hear many good reasons for fellow comics doing ads, including one joker who reckoned if his ad was successful the product would sell more and thus provide more jobs (good one), to another comic who assured me he only does ads for products that poor people can afford (dear me). The whole truth and nothing but the truth is that people do ads for lots of money and no other excuse will do.

So, apparently, crime isn't linked to poverty after all, but to the freedom of men "to engage in sexual intercourse without being powerfully constrained", according to social scientist Norman Dennis. It seems that if blokes stopped putting it about quite so much and settled down to a monogamous relationship (like they did in the old days, ho ho ho), they would not have the time, or the inclination to do an offence or post office. Surely, if men were nipping as much as Norman says, they'd be too tired to hold anything other than their own sawn-offs. Mr Dennis also argues that single mothers and the unemployed should be held partly responsible for their own low incomes. It seems Norman is a Labour man so at least his results seem to fit in with current party ideology. I rather liked Claire Rayner's reaction to Mr Dennis's research. It was well thought out, intelligent and apposite... and it was: "utter bollocks". Though if all these blokes are as rampant as we are led to believe, perhaps "empty bollocks" might have been more appropriate.



Westward cold. Shivering sheep scabble for grass on a Cornish moor. Photograph by John Voos. Taken with 20mm lens on a Nikon. Kodak ASA, 60th second at f16

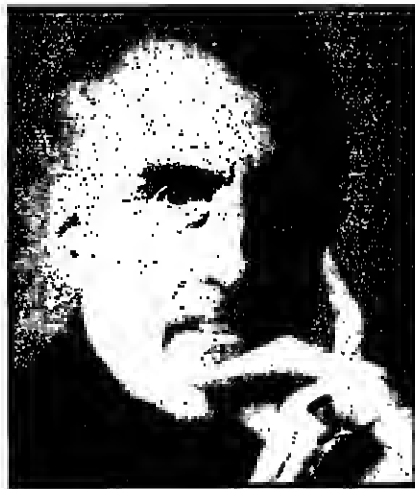


the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 4 JANUARY 1997

There's something about the stoicism of sheep in the cold which makes a freezing day seem colder and makes the inclination to hibernate almost irresistible. Here's a useless fact: in 1947 – one of the great chills of the century – 20 million sheep died in the frost. The antidote is here (though not for sheep). We can discover the secrets of *Sondheim*, take elegant tea, cruise in a Bentley, sort out our finances and order garden seeds to help us dream of a balmy scent-laden summer.

interview



Christopher Lee, Prince of Order

Star of new series *Ivanhoe* has 'one foot in the grave, one on a banana skin' **page 3**

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arts & books



A rebel after all these years

Stephen Sondheim cares about young writers. Enough to be interviewed about them. Just **page 4**

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Searching for owls and tiger bingos

Caroline Dilke finds herself twitching to discover the mysteries of birdwatching **page 9**

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Of teapots, coffee chic and good taste

Expensive, esoteric and exotic: the drinks that have become a new style accessory **page 17**

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Too many rooks spoil the froth

William Hartston traces the history of a new experiment in group chess deviancy

This week saw the launch, in a lather of frothy exuberance, of a new, improved version of the ancient game of chess. No longer will chess be a game for two players spelt with two esses. "Ches 3", invented after 11 years of painstaking research by Khia Rassmussen, has three players and one "s". Mr Rassmussen, from Perthshire, Scotland, is reported to have invested £40,000 in the development of the game, which has now been launched by the Brighton-based company Connection. But the omens for the game are not good, for the idea behind it is not as new as they seem to think.

David Pritchard's *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* lists 31 distinct versions of three-player chess, the earliest of which dates back to 1765. All feature different attempts to solve the two basic problems of the three-handed game: what's the shape of the board, and what do you have to do in order to defeat both opponents?

On the first count, the simplest idea is to extend the normal board to accommodate another set of pieces, as, for example, in the 1843 version by Tesche shown in the lowest diagram. But there is no way of doing this to produce perfect three-way symmetry. Squares into triangles won't go. You may, as Tesche claimed he had done, produce a game with more of less equal chances for the three players, but they still occupy different terrains at the start.

You can get round the problem by using hexagons instead of squares, as Sigmund Wellisch did in his 1912 "Three-Handed Hexagonal Chess". Hexagons, however, make life hell for bishops, because there are no real diagonals. You need either three quasi-hexagons to cover the whole board on pseudo-diagonals, or, as Wellisch preferred, to eliminate bishops from the game altogether. If you like hexagons and don't want to lose your bishops, there's a 1964 three-handed hexagonal game, invented by Joe Baxter, played on a 217-hexagon board with 19 men on each side.

If you want symmetry, but consider hexagons too outlandish, you can arrange your three sides at 120° angles to each other, but then face the problem of what to do with the space in the middle. Henry J Self, in 1895 (middle diagram), did nothing with it at all. On reaching the no-man's-land in the middle, a player just continues round its edge. "In my game," Self proudly announced, "the pieces of any one of the players have not the slightest advantage so far as position goes over either of the remaining players." On the other hand, once you have sent your pieces into battle against one opponent, it's a very long trip to get them back to fight the other.

Rassmussen's new game gets round that problem with an elegant diamond array serving as crossroads in the centre of the battlefield. You still have to decide whether to turn left or right on reaching the middle, but the route back is not so arduous. Similar attempts to design neat traffic intersections in the centre were designed by Coqueret and Waider, both in 1837.

But how do you decide who has won? The problem with three-handed chess that nobody has truly solved is to concoct a set of rules that prevents two players ganging up on the third, then fighting each other for the gold and silver medals. Self tried to encourage aggressive play by rewarding any player who checkmated another with the return of any of his captured pieces. Other variants, such as Tesche's, do not eliminate a checkmated (or stalemated) player, but merely freeze his participation in the game until such time as the checkmate is lifted. The eventual winner must leave both his opponent's checkmated simultaneously. Since forces used in a checkmate are liable to be needed sooner or later elsewhere, this can prolong a game almost indefinitely.

But will Ches 3 catch on? Over the past 25 years, Allegiance Chess, Chesser, Dreier-Schach, En Garde, Interface, Mad Three-party Chess, Neutral-Zone Chess, Three-Man Chess, Three-Player Chess, Tri-Chess, Trio Chess, Triscasia and Trisca are only a few of the proprietary three-player chess games that sank almost without trace soon after their launch.

We have also seen Four-Handed Dice Chess, Four-Handed Round Chess (played on a circular board), Decimal Four-Handed Chess (on a ten-by-ten board), Russian Four-Handed Chess, Forchess, Partnership Chess, Double Chess and a host of other chess deviations for four players.

The trouble is that the good old ancient game of chess for two seems to have the potential to create quite enough complexity, and certainly sufficient acrimony among its participants, to satisfy all our needs. And even if chess is not the perfect game, it has established itself too well as the principal intellectual board game in Western society. As the history of such games shown, when a mutated three-handed version evolves alongside the established species, it does not tend to survive.

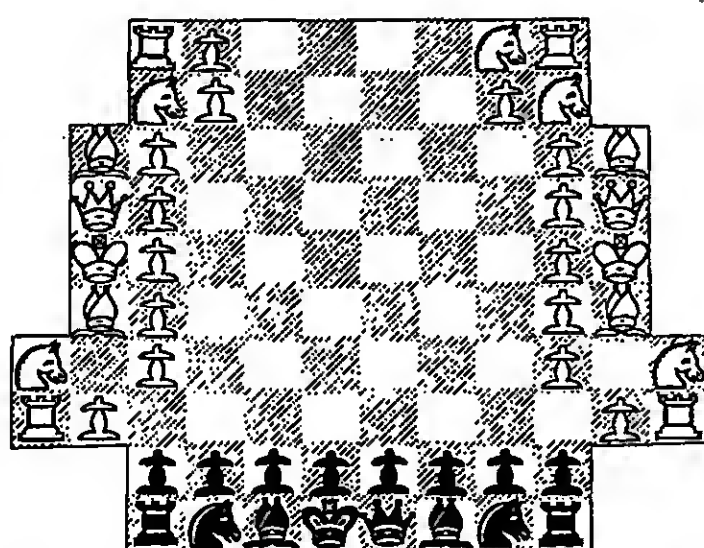
Sets of Ches 3 will soon be available at prices between £30 and £70. David Pritchard's *The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* may be obtained from: Games & Puzzles Publications, PO Box 20, Godalming, Surrey, for £21.99 including postage.



Three-handed chess, 1997-style: Khia Rassmussen's 'Ches 3'



Henry Self's 'New and Improved Chess for Three Players' (1895)



An 1843 three-hander: checkmate results in suspended animation

Games people play

Pandora Melly discovers what people really do in their spare time

Arvind Oberoi, 55, Company Director

I'll give you a game to play. I don't know what this is, but I played it once at a party in New York. Here is what you do. You get a sheet and throw it over the head of the host, and then you ask him, what does he have on him that we want? So he takes off his watch and his ring and gives them.

Meanwhile, you are walking around with a piece of paper on which is written: "It's the sheet". That is always the last thing he thinks you want. The name of the game is that he gives away everything. If you play with very close friends, then it becomes bizarre, and it's more fun when it gets a little kinky. You say: "It's something my wife wants." He's shouting: "Should I take off my trousers?" One man took off his wedding ring and his wife was furious later on: "How can you let go of my wedding ring?"

When I was growing up in Bombay, I used

to play a game called "Kitty-Kitty". You have two teams and one guy leans against a wall. The others bend over and hold each other round the waist, then the other team climbs on top. Ninety-five per cent of the time, what happens is that they all jump on the weakling. The hilarious part is if you have a lady playing. Then you tap one of the people on the back and say: "Kitty-Kitty, what number?" If he guesses the right number, all these guys jump off.

Where we used to play, we had this very pretty girl who later turned out to be a big model and film actress, and everybody was dying to jump on her.

'Popular Sports and Pastimes in India' (published in 1973 by the Indian Ministry of Education and Social Welfare) is available, for reference only, from the British Library. Plain white sheets are currently available at very reasonable prices in the January sales.

Whatever happened to ...

Unhealthy men

The Seventies. The decade of spending time at football, the pub, down the garden - anything as long as it's not with the family. Of soap-on-a-rope, Playboy, beer bellies and following Henry Cooper's advice to splash on Brut all over. And ending the day with a quick game of squash, and a heart attack.

Then 1976. Good and bad news for men: first the bad. Thatcher wins the Tory leadership, putting in question well-constructed mechanisms to exclude women from public life. But - Clinique launch "Skin Supplies for Men", a new kind of male beauty treatment. And it's quickly realised that Thatcher is as much a man as any of her colleagues.

So a whole raft of products floats down onto our shelves. Suddenly men, by their stumbling acquiescence, wonder what they have agreed to. By 1986 the Body Shop have their Mostly Men range and "dual action" face soap out, sounding sufficiently machine-like to enable men to use it without feeling embarrassed. Next are men's magazines: *GQ* followed by *FHM*. After a short pause to register astonishment at this new niche, they break the hold of pornography on the market. And they work on men's weak points to encourage dependency and neuroses, just as *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* have been doing to women for decades. Pictures of perfectly formed males and expensive clothing present a challenging image for men when they face up to the mirror. Encouraging the idea of sexual deficiency is the next important stage, and *Men's Health* magazine helps to give the impression that good sex is primarily a question of fitness. Weight training diagrams are shown next to equally carefully drawn sexual positions. For example, how low-seat rowing helps you to do "The Squat". The market economy along with its attendant trappings penetrates Britain, ending the charade that people should be liked for the "person inside". It's too much trouble wading through all that fat to find him. Entrance fees such as £105 at the Paddington, plus £158 annual subscription, are sufficient to keep out undesirables.

The result. The propaganda has its effect. A sad moment in 1993 as three British Gas workers are tested with beauty products by Aramis and shown to be "really knowledgeable", according to an Aramis executive. German industry may be fitter and leaner in economic terms than the British version but one member in particular stands out to the contrary. With reunification failing, people begin to attach less weight to the faded German economic miracle. They also notice how fat Kohl is. The BBC coyly starts referring to him as a "political heavyweight" and Clinton's comment: "I was watching Sumo wrestling last night and thought of you, Helmut" is the last straw in the world's perception of its larger participants.

Now This New Year's Eve the number of people who overdid it and were admitted to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary increased by 20 per cent. In Los Angeles a fitness lobby has been formed, adding another minority concern to the growing list. And we did not get healthier through the Eighties. Obesity among the adult population rose by 50 per cent. Imported capitalist neuroses have made us worse. But if you're worried about your weight, it's nice to think there's some who would welcome being in your position. Like the 800 million people starving to death in the rest of the world.

James Aufenast

Backgammon Chris Bray

Knowing when to double is probably the most difficult aspect of backgammon. To try to give some guidance on this topic I am going to introduce you to "Woolsey's Law". (Kit Woolsey is an American backgammon master and leading theoretician.)

The key to Woolsey's Law is to realise that there are three possible answers to the question: "If I double, is it a take for my opponent?" They are:

1. Yes, I'm absolutely sure it is a take.
2. No, I'm absolutely sure it is a pass.
3. I'm not 100 per cent sure.

Ignoring the first two categories for now, Woolsey's Law of Doubling states: "If the answer falls into category (3) then it is *always* correct to double." Let's see why the rule works:

Maybe the position is a pass. If you have failed to turn the cube when your opponent's correct action is to pass, then you may cost yourself considerable equity.

Perhaps your opponent will think it is a pass. Backgammon is largely a matter of judgement and your opponent's evaluation may be radically different from your own. Most players are pessimistic about a position when they are losing and often pass when taking is the theoretically correct action.

Maybe it is a correct double and a correct take. The majority of early game doubles are also takes and therefore your action is likely to be correct.

The worst case is if your double is incorrect and your opponent correctly takes. This is unfortunate but by no means the end of the world. Unless you have completely mis-evaluated the position you are likely to have an edge and be the favourite. You have forfeited future use of the cube to your opponent but you are playing for doubled stakes with an advantage - how had can that be?

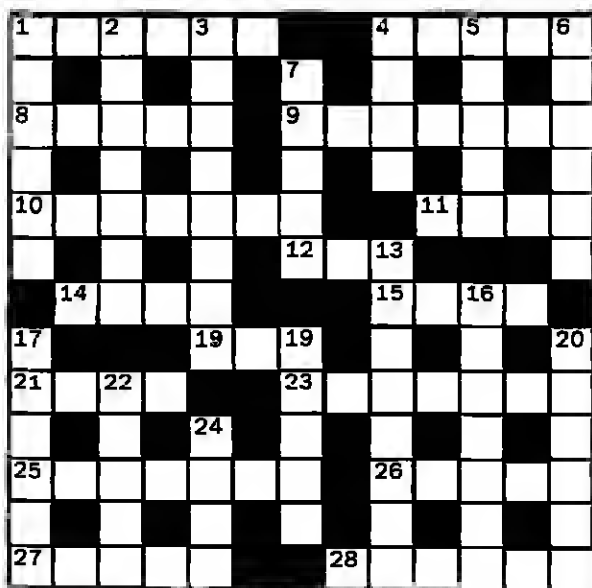
When Woolsey first discovered this law and began applying it he saw a tremendous improvement in his results. He began winning doubled games and gammons where previously he had been waiting too long and only collecting single points, so he was winning approximately the same number of games but his equity per game increased dramatically.

Doubling theory is the most complex area of the game but the application of Woolsey's Law can make life a little bit easier - it also leads to games with high cubes!

I shall give a practical example of all this in my next article.

concise crossword

No. 3187 Saturday 4 January



ACROSS

- 1 Greenmantle author (6)
- 2 Approaches (5)
- 3 Words of song (5)
- 4 Set free (7)
- 5 Counsels (7)
- 6 Canvas shelter (4)
- 7 Witnessed (3)
- 8 Ruin (4)
- 9 Thames at Oxford (4)
- 10 Edge (3)
- 11 Wind instrument (4)
- 12 In general (7)
- 13 Of no avail (7)
- 14 Banish (5)
- 15 German city (5)
- 16 State confidently (6)

DOWN

- 1 Spanish port (6)
- 2 Mohic home (7)
- 3 Forebear (8)
- 4 African river (4)
- 5 Proverb (5)
- 6 Detective (6)
- 7 Informer (5)
- 8 Radio (7)
- 9 Fancy (7)
- 10 Book (6)
- 11 Damp (5)
- 12 Able to speak language easily (6)
- 13 Begins (5)
- 14 Blood vessel (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Punch, 4 Meant (Punishment), 10 Quibble, 11 Tide, 12 Arch, 13 Italian, 15 Eddy, 17 Delta, 19 Nudge, 20 Ties, 23 Jealous, 27 Giddy, 29 Cover, 30 Sarcasm, 31 Frost, 32 Myth, DOWN: 2 Units, 3 Cabinet, 5 Extra, 6 Netting, 7 Squat, 8 Tepid, 9 Being, 14 Tyne, 16 Data, 18 Each way, 20 Urgency, 21 Eject, 23 Irish, 24 Pygmy, 26 Large, 28 Defer.

Bridge Alan Hiron

N-S Game: dealer West

North
♠ A K 10 9 7 4
♥ K 10
♦ J 5
♣ A K J

West
♠ J 3 2
♥ 9 8 6 5 3
♦ 6 4 2
♣ 9 7

East
♠ Q 8 6 5
♥ A J
♦ A K 9 8
♣ 10 5 2

South
♠ none
♥ Q 7 4 2
♦ Q 10 7 3
♣ Q 8 6 4 3

What would be your reaction if, as North on this deal, you heard your partner remove your penalty double of an opponent's contract of Two Spades? Mixed. I dare say.

The hand came up in the 1996 Lederer Memorial Trophy which saw the London team winning comfortably. Their opponents here were the Premier League winners who represented Britain in the recent Olympiad. The Hackett twins, Jason and Justin, had an unopposed auction to end in Four Spades - a contract which was easily defeated.

The real action came at the other table. Brian Callaghan, as North, opened with a strong club

and Paul Hackett overcalled with Two Clubs, conventionally showing length in spades and diamonds. With scattered values, David Burn, as South, doubled and after two passes, East retreated to Two Diamonds. Burn doubled again and Ian Monaghan, as West, tried Two Spades. North felt that he was on a fairly firm ground in doubling this, but South had other ideas and cue-bid Three Spades.

With what he later described as "a fair guard" in spades, North reluctantly bid Three No-trumps, which ended the bidding. Oddly enough, it was all for the best. Consider: nine tricks in no-trumps proved extremely easy and the Londoners scored 600 points. But what about the possible defence to Two Spades? The defenders cannot conveniently play trumps: if they do, declarer makes two tricks in the suit to go with his three red suit winners while, if they do not touch trumps, East can come to a club ruff in dummy. In other words, a penalty of 500 points would be the maximum so, whatever North may have thought at the time, perhaps South's judgement was not quite as bad as it may have seemed after all!

Perplexity competition results

14 December competition:
Answers: Christmas (arch + mist)
Pantomime (optima + men)
Cinderella (linc + cradle)
Winner: Mrs Carol Franklin (Ilford, Essex).

21 December competition:
Answers: A Christmas Carol.

Ebenezer Scrooge.
Winner: Mrs Violet Holmes (Merseyside).

The usual Perplexity competition will return next week, when we shall be announcing more winners of pre-Christmas competitions.

Don't junk it ... use it

Digital mousetraps and no dandruff

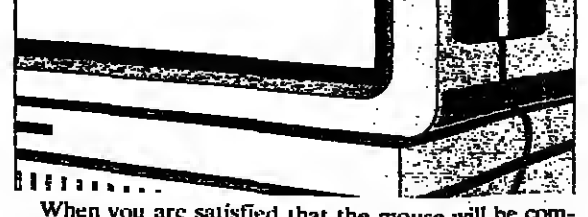
Does your mouse get lost under piles of paper on your desk? Do its movements become erratic as it picks up pieces of fluff? Do you suffer from dry, lifeless hair? Don't worry! You can solve all the problems at once with the shampoo-bottle computer mouse-pouch.



First select a brand of shampoo appropriate to your hair and mouse, more particularly the latter. (Fat mice require fatter bottles.) Wash hair well, repeating as necessary until bottle is empty.

Rinse the bottle thoroughly, then, using a strong pair of scissors or Stanley knife, cut along the dotted lines. Discard the portion that includes the top of the bottle.

Check that your mouse fits snugly into its new nest. At the first sign of discomfort, change your shampoo.



When you are satisfied that the mouse will be comfortable, fix the newly-made mouse part to the side of your computer with double-sided sticky tape or two pieces of Velcro. Tuck your mouse away tidily, with its tail hanging through the slit.

Bawn O'Beirne-Ranelagh

TURN TO PAGE 23... for the weather, sky at night, Jasper Rees on TV, Robert Hanks on radio and Kerber's new cartoon strip

The Prince of Order

Christopher Lee has 'one foot in the grave, one on a banana skin'. But he's still alive and singing, he tells Janie Lawrence

It's all a little alarming. I thought I was going to meet Christopher Lee. The Christopher Lee. But am I? I mention this to friends and begin to wonder. After the umpteenth, "Oh, is he still alive?" I feel I have to double-check with the publicist.

No, there is no mistake. Yes, it is he. Sunken cheekbones, penetrating eyes? Yes, yes. Count Dracula. Lord of the Undead? Absolutely.

Reassured that Mr Lee is still with us I discover that it's not only a puzzled public who have prematurely written him off. According to an American Encyclopedia of film, he popped his clogs three years ago.

"Oh yes, I've died - on the 31st of March, 1993," the man himself says unperturbed. "I heard about it when somebody wrote to me saying that I wasn't doing too badly - considering. I was told to sue them but I didn't want to get involved in American litigation."

We are in a drawing room in one of those small ch-chi hotels just off Sloane Square, a stone's throw from Mr Lee's own home. A towering figure with ramrod posture, this is a man very much alive. Mr Lee has what they call in the "biz", presence. Bucketfuls of it. When he speaks every word is made to count. Each inflection is delivered with military precision. Not a vowel wasted. Currently bearded, the actor looks a good 10 years younger than 74, is vastly more attractive than I've imagined and, happily to report, appears to be in fine fettle. Unfortunately, I'm not. Desperately sneezing and mid flu I have attempted to postpone the interview. He's understandably annoyed that the message hasn't reached him. "I would have said, 'Keep away from me,'" he booms. "Supposing I was Pavarotti." Feebly I venture that I'm probably no longer contagious. "You mean infectious," he corrects, as I attempt to splutter quietly and conceal the mounting pile of discarded tissues in my handbag. Mr Lee doesn't suffer fools gladly. He tells me so.

Thankfully I don't need to say much. Christopher Lee needs the minimum of encouragement to talk. About this I have been forewarned. There is the now legendary tale that one woman fainted at a table next to him in a Hollywood restaurant and, still talking, he never noticed. Almost definitely apocryphal, it's not hard to imagine how such a story came to pass.

An actor - note the stressed or - he has an opinion on almost anything and segues seamlessly from one topic to another. He is also delightfully unencumbered by anything approaching political correctness. Discipline, duty and responsibility are words that frequently arise. And, albeit I am in my mid-thirties, I am nevertheless "the girl who shouldn't have got out of bed".

The reason I have to be so tight about his new project - the BBC-six part adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (which begins on Sunday, 12 January) - in which he plays the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Lucas de Beaumanoir. He was already a big fan of the story before filming. "It's a great saga, a classic with everything in it. Honour, loyalty, bravery."

Co-starring Ciaran Hinds and Steven Waddington, he declares he was by far and away the oldest member of the cast. "They were all so young. So to them I must have seemed one foot in the grave, the other on a banana skin."

Did that make him at all nervous? "Nervous," he repeats in a tone reminiscent of the Wildean "Handbag". "Nervous about what? I've tried in the last few years to work with up and coming young people. I think it's one's duty to do that if you can. And I was very impressed, which doesn't happen very often. You get a feeling when you get into some things - certainly after the length of time I've been involved - whether something's going to work."

Filming took place in Northumbria, where, he claims, the weather was colder than anywhere he's ever been, "including Alaska". Nevertheless, the role of Beaumanoir is one he relished playing. "All members of the Order are terrified of him because they are well aware that he can order their instant execution in minutes if they've stepped over the line. He has more power than any king or even the Pope. He orders one of the abbots to be lashed just like that." He demonstrates with a whistling line slowly, melodramatically. "Just-like-that."

"He's a religious fanatic. Probably a virgin, probably terribly repressed."

Being frightening has been Mr Lee's career stock in trade. Does he consider himself similarly intimidating? I, for one, could never imagine him being the type of elderly gentleman who lends himself to having his hair ruffled by exuberant children. "A lot of people think I'm aloof but that's not the case. I give that impression because I don't fling my arms around someone within five minutes of meeting them. But people aren't scared of me."

Evidently I look dubious. "No, they really aren't you know. Children have always looked at me as the wicked uncle."

With what he says are "over 250 credits" in films, it's widely reported that Mr Lee gets a bit miffed when people insist on harking back to his years in the Hammer Horror films. So I expect an unfavourable reaction when I allude to them. But more resigned rather than put out he asks, "How many do you think I've done?" It's a rhetorical question and he continues, "I'd say between 10 and 15, no more. You can't count Fu Manchu films as horror." As for the number of occasions he put in Dracula's fangs, he professes he really can't remember. "About six I think. But the last time was 25 years ago."

By that stage he says he'd "had enough" of the Prince of Darkness. "I made it very clear that the whole presentation of the character had gone completely to pot. So I said, never again. Not unless they made Stoker's book exactly, and I emphasise exactly, as he wrote it. It's never been done." It was to escape this typecasting that he packed his bags and spent 10 years in Los Angeles, returning to London in 1986. "Professionally, without doubt, it was the most important thing I ever did. And, without doubt, it had to be done. And, without doubt, I proved my point. People said to me, 'If you stay in Britain you'll make a very good living but you'll never be asked to do anything else. You'll always be in roughly the same kind of film. And eventually you'll get bored and frustrated. And, of course, if you get bored you're going to bore the audience.'"

"The Americans, on the other hand, will always give you one chance. Where the British are inclined to say, 'You have got a, you have got b, but you haven't got c, the Americans say, 'we're going to use what you have got'."

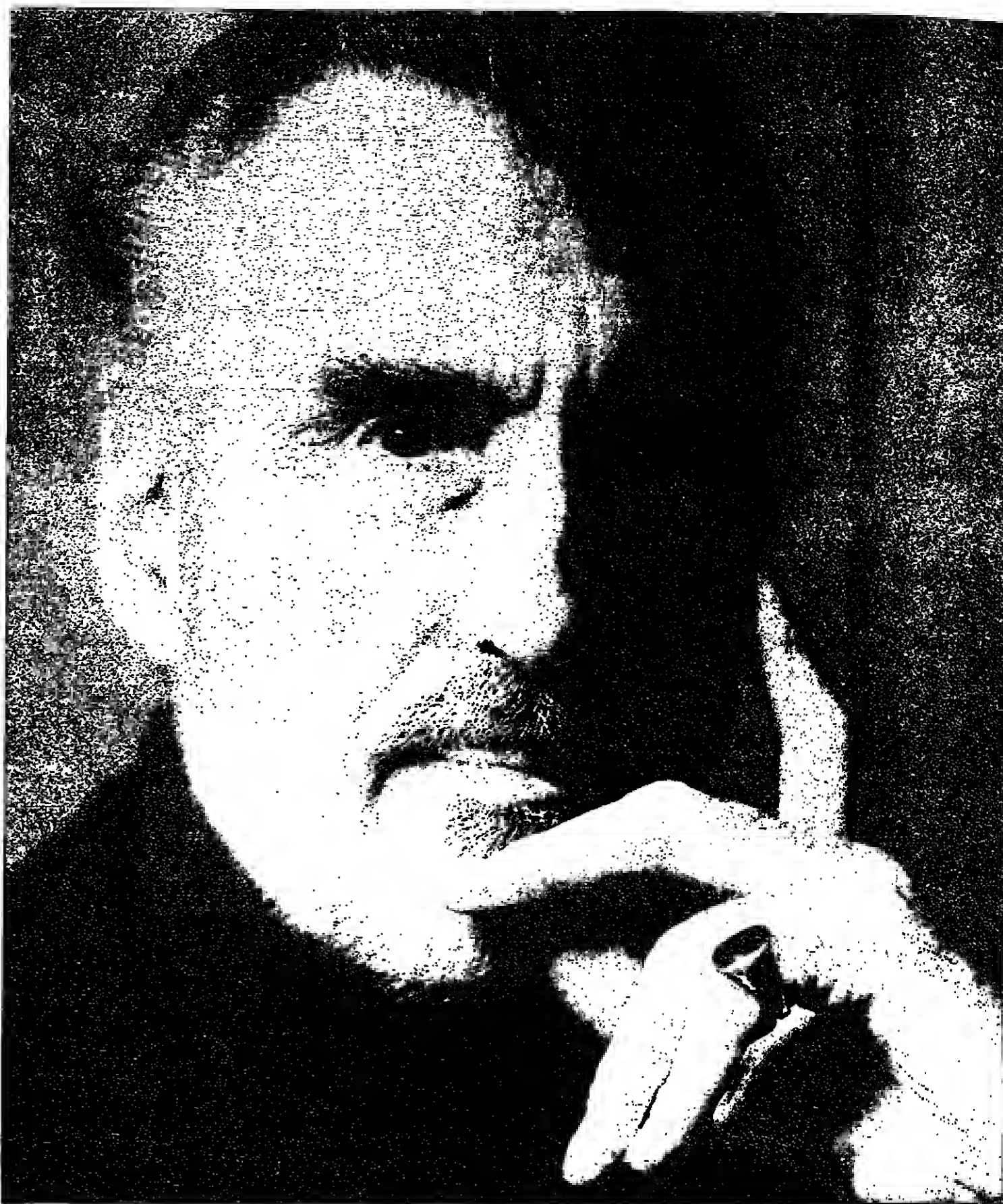
It is evidently a source of some pride to him that he was offered roles that proved he was capable of far more than sinking his teeth into young maidens' necks. "Half of what I did in 10 years was comedy. It's on the screen. I hosted *Saturday Night Live* with John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd. And how did it do? It was the third highest-rated show they ever had. I did westerns, I played Americans in American films, in one, *Serial*, I was a tough businessman in the week and at weekends the head of a band of gay Hell's Angels."

The briefest of pauses. "Do you think I'd have been offered that here?" he thunders. "Not in a millennium," his voice roars to a crescendo. "And, if you were to ask people here what I did for the 10 years I was in America I'm sure they'd look absolutely blank."

He sounds resentful. "No, not in the least," he denies. "I realise people's imaginations are limited. I was frustrated. I'm not particularly tolerant of stupidity or people who don't do their homework."

He returned to Britain satisfied that he had achieved what he set out to "and because I'm a European and I wanted to return to my roots". That said, he is very much a product of his generation and sees little about contemporary Britain to be proud of. "I didn't get married until I was nearly 40 because I couldn't afford it. If you can't support a wife and family you have no right to get married, in my opinion. Today people make an awful lot of fuss about their rights but what about their responsibilities?"

He's all for the return of National Service for the young, despairs of the way he believes justice is weighted towards the criminal rather than the victim, and cites the number of homeless as "deplorable". "There's a lack of discipline, a lack of manners. A total decline in behaviour and morals. It's all gone downhill. Who opens a door for a woman? Who takes a hat off if they're wearing one? I've no objection to saying to someone, 'I think you've dropped this [litter]', but then you get a stream of abuse. Abuse is the refuge of the incoherent."



Christopher Lee: 'Children always treat me as the wicked uncle.' Below, as the Grand Master in *Ivanhoe*

PHOTO: ANDREW BURMAN

ent. And you never get any support. On many such occasions he says he has been tempted to "belt" someone. In fact, not so long ago he did. Not a wise move, I venture. "My hands still move very fast," he fires back. "And I learnt a lot of extremely unpleasant things during the war so I know what to do."

The son of an Italian countess - he can theoretically use the title Count Carandini - and a British soldier - his parents divorced when he was a child. When his stepfather ran out of money he had to leave school, Wellington, whereupon, at 16, he got his first job as a messenger boy for £1 a week. Soon after he volunteered for duty and trained as a pilot for the RAF, but as he had some

trouble with his eyesight he was drafted into Intelligence and the Special Forces. "About which I'm not really prepared to talk. It's an unwritten code that you don't discuss certain things."

Various attempts to ferret out something more specific are fruitless. "If you work in Special Forces that inevitably means you're involved in secret operations. It doesn't mean to say that I was a spy with the French Resistance in Paris. Can you see me at 6ft 4ins being inconspicuous?"

But wasn't he decorated? He

starred in *Dark Places*. "Joan is a jolly good actress. It's not just hot air like it is with a lot of others. She works and she knows what she's doing."

So what modern films might he call fantastic? He looks bemused. "Is that too strong a word?" I ask, feeling like a schoolgirl who's just used some inappropriately hip slang. "Good, I would think, is the word."

He replies steadily. "I don't go to the cinema very often because there's hardly anything, in my opinion, worth seeing."

What about *Four Weddings and a Funeral*? No, he hasn't seen it. Or,

the Woody Allen films? He hasn't seen any. He is most likely to go to a film if it features the work of a specific actor. He has huge respect for Gene Hackman and has been impressed by Tom Cruise in *Rainman* and Chris O'Donnell.

And women? He ponders. "Katharine Hepburn is a real star. Magic. Magic. Anne Bancroft. The young? - two really, Jodie Foster and Michelle Pfeiffer. As for British actresses - I've seen Emma Thompson only once" - he can't think of any.

"Now it's all I want to be rich and famous in five minutes. I'm going to walk in front of the camera when I feel like it. I might say a line or two. Hey, didn't you read in the paper

opera and western cowboy songs, he sings in German, French, Italian and English. "I know it sounds terribly immodest but I have actually created music history. Because nobody of 74 who can't read music and isn't a trained opera singer has made a record of these songs. And every single one of the voices I use on these songs is different." He shrugs at the inevitability of the album title - *Christopher Lee sings Rogues, Demons and Villains*.

All in all, he reckons he's "damned lucky to still be here". Eleven years ago he had heart surgery to mend a faulty valve. Consequently, he no longer eats all the sweet things he loved and has finally given up smoking his pipe. Meanwhile, old friends of his now have legitimate posthumous entries in film encyclopedias. "God, yes, I hardly dare open the paper now. Apart from people in the same profession, there's all the people I knew in the war. Most of them are dead."

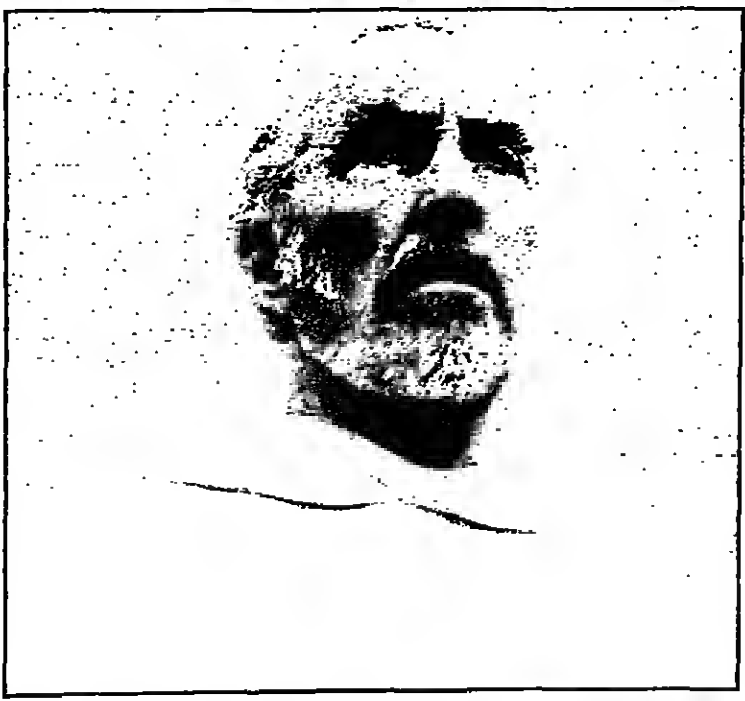
Of course, this includes both his Hammer co-stars, Peter Cushing and Vincent Price. It's the only time in two hours his shoulders visibly droop. "They were both very dear friends and I miss them both very much. Especially Peter. He was a wonderful man and I was devoted to him. I miss all the conversations I used to have with him on the telephone that were very special to us. There were certain things we used to laugh about that would have meant nothing to anyone else. And now there's nobody in the world with whom I can have those conversations."

"He fought the cancer for 10 years - he was immensely brave. A few months before he died we did some work together for a voiceover. The last thing I remember was him waving out of a car after we'd finished."

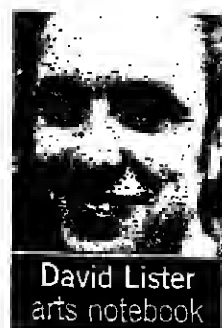
This year he will have been married to his Danish wife, Gitte, for 35 years and he reckons his 33-year-old daughter, Christina will probably get married. "Perhaps I'll be a grandfather one day although it's a bit late actually to be a grandfather."

As for himself, he categorically states he has no intention whatsoever of taking it easy and spending more time on the golf course, his great passion. Fluent in three languages - French, Italian and German - and passable in another two, he often works abroad and is generally recognised and pursued by autograph-hunters wherever he goes.

"It's very simple. I'm a working actor and I'll never retire."



'I can tell you exactly how long a shelf-life an actor or actress has. I have been proved right every single time'



David Lister arts notebook

This week Waterstone's and Virgin announced an exclusive deal with publishers Pimlico to re-publish a one-volume edition of John Lennon's *Goonish Stories* books *In His Own Words* and *A Spaniard in the Works*. It was these two collections of surreal stories, poems and drawings that established Lennon's reputation as the literary Beatle. Reading through the republished edition, Lennon's analysis of Harold Wilson's victory in 1964 seems as fresh as ever. "Azule on gnome, Harassed Wilsod won the General Election, with a very small marjorie over the Tories. Thus puddling the Laboring Party back into powell after a large abcess. This he could not have done withoutspan the harking of thee Trade Onions... Sir Alice Doughtless Whom was quote 'bithery disappointed' hut managed to keep smirking on his 500,000 acre estate in Scotland..." Let's hope that Tony Blair has a chronicle among the Britpop bands to rival that. But it's pretty doubtful. Even among the wide range of political satirists and TV comedy programmes few, if any, are as inclined as Lennon was to play language games. It's a slice of humour that has sadly disappeared.

There is a startling new array of definitions in the upcoming edition of the Collins Dictionary. Totty has changed from being a Scottish word for tiny to "British informal: women collectively considered as sexual objects". Music seems to have spawned a disproportionate amount of changes to the English language. Jarvis Cocker's song about Es and Whizz must claim some of the credit for the definition of whizz, formerly just a loud humming or a skilful person, now officially recognised as a slang word for amphetamine. Wallpaper, formerly, well, wallpaper, is now "something pleasant but bland serving as unobtrusive background eg guitar rock wallpaper". And handbag is now "a commercial style of house music [from an allusion to women dancing round their handbags in discos]". So if you hear someone remarking on the totty dancing to the wallpaper as if it were handbag, they've either swallowed too many whizz or the dictionary.

One Lottery application that I wish every success is that being planned by West End producer Duncan Weldon, whose out-of-town activity also sees him as director of the Chichester Festival Theatre. Mr Weldon wants a new £7m theatre at the Chichester complex to add to the two theatres already there. The addition of a third theatre would change Chichester from a summer festival venue to an all-year-round producing venue. A new 800-seater theatre would help Chichester attract West End and Broadway transfers. At present too few touring shows are suited to the main house, which has a thrust stage. I foresee a problem as the new theatre would need a fly tower, which might obscure views of Chichester Cathedral: but it should not be an insurmountable design problem. And expanding this south-coast complex - once the summer venue for Olivier's National theatre - so that it is once more a key theatrical venue would be lottery money well spent.

The Hollywood star Jessica Lange brought a touch of California to the opening of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in which she starred as Blanche Dubois this week, but in an unexpected location. The ushers at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, guided us in announcing: "Stalls downstairs, bathrooms are to your right." I'm all for doing everything possible to make American tourists welcome in the theatre. I would defend allowing their film stars to play lead roles on the West End stage. But there are limits. Leave us our lavatories.

JOHN WALSH IS ON HOLIDAY

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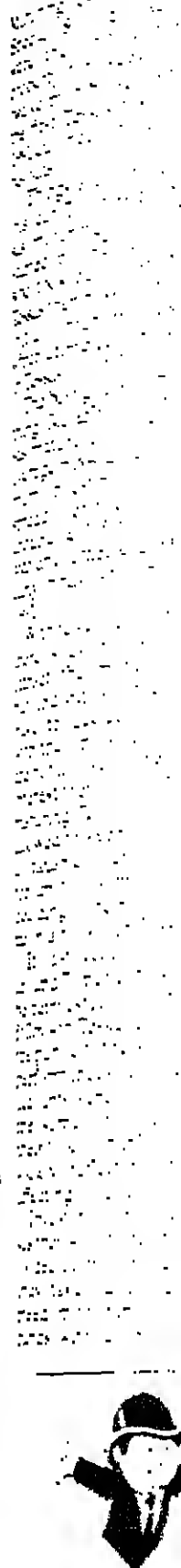


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Don't blame it on the ballet

As the Royal Ballet's 'Cinderella' and the Kirov's 'Nutcracker' bow out today, Louise Levene reflects on two productions that, despite their star turns, never quite believe in their own magic

Miyako Yoshida's combination of modest sweetness and sure classical technique made her an obvious choice for Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella*. The touchstone of his conception of Perrault's story is gentleness. This isn't a chronicle of child abuse within a dysfunctional family, nor is it an allegory of the proletarian struggle against a decadent bourgeoisie (whatever Prokofiev's occasionally sarcastic score might suggest). For Ashton, *Cinderella* is the universally intelligible story of a wallflower whose dreams of sartorial splendour and social success are realised in one short magical night. Reduced to this, the tale seems a tawdry one, but the choreographer contrives, through the character of Cinderella herself, to transcend bourgeois wish-fulfilment and create a story of wit, forbearance and the redemptive power of unselfish love. To pull this off, each meticulously drawn role must be enacted with total clarity, each relationship charted with scrupulous care. To be sure of our sympathy, Cinderella must show a satirical streak in her saucy parodies of the Ugly Sisters, but convey her filial devotion in the awkward tendernesses between herself and her father. It is these glimpses of the heroine beneath the rags in Act I that prepare us for the Prince's *coup de foudre* in the Ballroom.

Yoshida's Prince this season is Bruce Sansom. Neatly made, with boyish good looks and an exquisite line, he was born to dance Ashton's heroes. He acts too. In his exchanges with the Ugly Sisters (honey-roast ham from Messrs Page & Webb), his convincing air of dignity and courtesy mask a strong sense of the ridiculous. His duets with Yoshida are master-class material: he makes the long travelling lifts look painless and his eyes seldom leave his ballerina's face. The Prince's other big relationship is the curious bond between himself and the jester. Unhappily for Sansom, this role was danced by Tetsuya Kumakawa, who span and leapt fabulously but whose only relationship was, as always, with his public.

The Christmas trees may not come down until Monday but the Kirov Ballet's pink tinsel production of *The Nutcracker* will be put back in its tank of formaldehyde tonight after its 28th performance at the London Coliseum. Until relatively recently, the very thought of Russian ballet dancers live in captivity was enough to have ballet-fanciers and name-droppers queuing round the block on pointe, but increasing familiarity with the species has caused public enthusiasm to cool somewhat: there have been seats available for virtually every performance. Victor Hochhauser's choice of programme may have been part of the



Miyako Yoshida: modest sweetness and sure technique

Photo: Bill Cooper

problem: three weeks is a hell of a lot of *Nutcracker* and only crazy balletomanes and stir-crazy critics bother to catch different casts. With a more varied schedule you stand a chance of getting some multiple bookings. Even the dancers look bored: stuck in the same roles night after night (presumably to save on extra wigs and costumes), they dance on auto-pilot and gossip visibly upstairs. In July, the company returns with treats like *Don Quixote*, *Giselle* and *The Firebird*, plus some hoped-for guest appearances by Sylvie Guillem, which may all prove more inspiring for box-office and dancers alike. Stars always make a difference.

Anyone dragging themselves away from their turkey rissoles on Boxing Day in the hope of seeing New York City Ballet star Igor Zelensky before he becomes Darcey Bussell's guest partner in February would have been as disappointed as I was to see the words "Faroukh" and "Ruzimatov" typed in his place. Once possessed of a certain snorting appeal, this extremely handsome dancer has degenerated into a mannered pastiche of his former self. He was partnering Diana Vishneva, the archetypal Kirov ballerina of the Nineties: tall, sleek, technically assured and with all the warmth and originality of an After Eight mint.

The stock response to such criticism is to blame the ballet. Igor Zelensky has made it clear that it holds no particular interest for him: "It's for the children, not for the ballet dancers." With this production (and let's face it, many, many other productions), you can sympathise with such an attitude, but once a dancer starts to think like that, you can wave goodbye to a truly great performance. A classical dancer is required to believe six impossible things before breakfast. Asymuratsova and Mukhamedov inhabit such a wonderland and can move you to tears in scenarios as slight as the *Nutcracker*. In this ballet, Zelensky moves us only to applause. He wasn't bad, though. On Wednesday night, his partnering was a little over-anxious here and there – an occupational hazard when you're scheduled to dance with a different girl every day of the week. But his powerful jump, his meticulous landings and his altogether rather meaty classicism were a welcome sight. Roll on February. Final performances today: Kirov *Nutcracker*, 2.30pm, 7.30pm London Coliseum, WC2 (0171-632 8300); Royal Ballet *Cinderella* 12 noon, ROH, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171-304 4000)

A suitable case for treatment

Chloe Poems Healing Roadshow Battersea Arts Centre, London

By Dominic Cavendish

At the end of her *Healing Roadshow*, Chloe Poems announces that there has been, let's face it, precious little in the way of healing. "That was just a gimmick to get you to come," she explains, smiling sweetly and launching into a collective aura-audit. For many people, an evening in the company of a gay, socialist, transvestite poet is, in itself, an event. They can probably do without the actual laying on of hands, especially once they've learnt where the mits of this "well-oiled cog in the wheel of life" have wandered. It's just a shame that the material Poems slips in by way of curative alternative – to show she's no mere novelty item, no panto dame with a difference – is so worn and familiar.

That material, initially, is gingham-based, a "a fabric made sacred by *The Little House on the Prairie*", we are told. It provided the psychological trigger that caused her to shrug off her masculine Tory alter-ego (Paddy Field, MP for the Wirral Peninsula). Its inherent socialism (the interdependent strands) will help Poems on her mission "to make the world a better place". Here, it clothes her and adorns her throne. The opening mock-homage to its power is almost undiluted Dame Edna (although her creator, Jenni Potter, has far bairier forearms). Poems salivates in toothy delight, her alliterative hymn ("Watch it swoosh and swish and swirl") rising to a falsetto crescendo

("It's here, it's queer and it's not going to be made into net curtains"). Unfortunately, most of the show is taken up with Poems trying to prove that her rouge, unlike that of Humphries' housewife superstar, has a defiantly militant hue.

After two rhythmic forays into the melancholy vales of gay clubland *de la* Pauline Calf – the first boasting the memorable shriek-after-me chorus: "Nothing's gonna stop us / Sniffin' our poppers", the second an accidental scat in a darkroom mistaken for a toilet – Poems gets on with her self-appointed task of repoliticising drag. First, she rounds on the apathy and body fascism of gay men, asking, in "Muscle Mary Quite Contrary, or It's

Almost As If Hitler Won": "Oh, such a fine and structured face / Am I staring at the master race?" Then she sets about driving a stake through the heart of one of the drag queens of the undead, "whn refuse to see queer as a movement". This involves doing a poor impersonation of a stock-type female impersonator, delivering each non-pole with an exaggerated hitching of falsetto and hairpiece.

Not only does all this feel as if it's being delivered to the wrong audience – a working men's club would surely be more of a challenge than the BAC – but its lack of subtlety means that Poems' pornographic finale sounds like more of the same rather than a step forward. Renouncing

God and society for "the evils of masculine embrace", the poet (or should that be poetaster?) resembles a child running amok in a wordsmithy, hammering at any rhyme that might send the sparks flying – "We've been so high / We've touched the sky / We've even watched our friends die".

John Hegley, who pulled up at the same venue a few weeks ago with his squirting-my-nipples-at-my-brother-in-law routine is more subversive than this. With Hegley, the personal isn't political, it's just funny. Take away Chloe Poems' gingham frock, and what you're left with doesn't even raise an eyebrow.

To 12 Jan, BAC (0171-223-2223)

THE WEEK IN REVIEW		David Benedict		
		THE FILM	THE PLAY	THE OPERA
		Shine	A Streetcar Named Desire	Chérubin
overview		The true story of the emancipation of a young pianist struggling beneath the tyranny of his father as written and directed by the Australian Scott Hicks. Already laden with awards.	Jessica Lange plays Blanche (for the third time) opposite Toby Stephens and Imogen Stubbs in Peter Hall's revival of Tennessee Williams's powerful, steamy tale of self-delusion, sex and repression.	Tim Albery revives his colourful production of Massenet's comic sequel to <i>Figaro</i> with Susan Graham, Alison Hagley and Elizabeth Futral. Designed by Antony McDonald and conducted by John Eliot Gardiner.
critical view		Ryan Gilbey tossed aside cynicism: "Far more than the sum of your goosebumps." "Extraordinarily watchable... doesn't insult the intelligence," agreed the <i>Guardian</i> . "Shattering," gulped the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Uplifting... the first essential film of the new year," marvelled the <i>Times</i> . "Already in the 1997 Top Ten," yelled <i>Time Out</i> . "Doesn't make me take a shine to <i>Shine</i> ," scoffed the <i>Standard</i> . "Rain Man meets Rachmaninov," snarled the <i>FT</i> .	Paul Taylor was unconvinced. "Lange comes over like an object lesson in healthy ageing." "Fails to do justice to a masterpiece," concurred the <i>Telegraph</i> . "I still find it hard to believe in her," worried the <i>Guardian</i> . "Finely judged, sensitive, witty, intelligent, stylish... one of the great plays of the century," praised the <i>FT</i> . "Sustains the proper tension and, when the climaxes come, achieves the necessary intensity," admired the <i>Times</i> .	Julian Anderson gloried in "a thing of joy, an evening of froth, bubble and excitement that should be seen without delay." "Blissfully sung and conducted superbly... Susan Graham wins all hearts with charismatic energy and gloriously rich, emotion-filled singing... magnificently entertaining," crowed the <i>Standard</i> . "Gardiner paces the piece to perfection... unmissable," revelled the <i>Times</i> . "Elegant and even innocuously enjoyable," grumbled the <i>Telegraph</i> .
on view		Cert 12, 105 minutes. On general release.	Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London SW1 (0171-930 8800).	Ton't, 7, 10 & 14 Jan at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-304 4000)
our view		Hugely emotional stuff.	Something is wrong when Stella (Imogen Stubbs) gives the best performance.	Even better than first time round. Lush and lusty, like overdosing on truffles.

LAST 4 WEEKS
MUST END 1 FEBRUARY

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The book
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Nostromo
(1904)
by Joseph Conrad

Plot: Sulaco is the wealthy province of Conrad's fictional South American republic, Costaguana. The money springs from the San Tomé silver mines, property of Charles Gould, an idealist paradoxically dedicated to "material interests".

Costaguana vibrates with civil unrest. Backed by the US, the legal government clings onto Sulaco: it is opposed by the populist demagogue Montero who wants to seize the province and its silver. Gould entrusts six months' silver production to Italian shop-steward Nostromo and the anti-Montero journalist Decoud. Nostromo is consumed by pride, Decoud by scepticism.

This pair escape at night in a lighter clean shirt with treasure; crash into a troopship; reach a small island; bury the loot.

Nostromo returns to Sulaco convinced that he has been exploited by his superiors; Decoud remains on the island and drowns himself using a couple of silver bars.

Nostromo helps to defeat the rebels but nothing ameliorates his bitterness. Courting the daughter of the island's lighthouse keeper, he gradually unearths the silver which the world believes lost. He grows rich ounce by ounce. One night he is mistaken for a thief; the lighthouse keeper shoots him. Gould continues to nurse the San Tomé mine, blindly unaware that his devotion brings destruction.

Theme: "There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law and their justice." Capitalism corrodes moral principle by promoting the myth of progress.

Revolutions are a sham: Costaguana is controlled by the mine, not the people. Individuals who seek redemption in heroism are merely flirting with a flattering illusion.

Style: The narrative is unimaginably oblique. Flashbacks and digressions show history stupidly repeating itself. The prose is dry and sardonic with a thread of malice.

Chief strengths: The only English novel to compete in range and scale with *War and Peace*, Conrad demonstrates how intellectual, political and economic forces distort individuals and nations. He audaciously combines the sweep of 19th-century fiction with the impressionistic techniques of modernism.

Chief weaknesses: Conrad is prone to acute bouts of sentimentality, especially when female characters lurch into view; the control of dialogue is erratic because his colloquialisms sound manufactured.

What they thought of it then: Unsurprisingly, *Nostromo* failed to top the bestseller charts. In later years, Conrad recalled that, "with the public," the novel provoked "the blackest possible frost." Nonetheless, Arnold Bennett thought it the finest novel of his generation: "peerless, and there's no more to be said".

What we think of it now: *Nostromo* has just about survived Leavis's massive endorsement, remaining Conrad's masterpiece. Even so, it is admired rather than read. Conrad's grim asperity discourages the formation of a fan club.

Responsible for: Paul Scott squeezing Foster's *Passage to India* through the Conradian mincer to produce the *Raj Quartet*; the new tele-serial, which should be able to borrow costume cast-offs from *Rhodes*.

Gavin Griffiths

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Steamed up in a melting pot

Do clean shirts and cookbooks signal the decline of civilisation?
Lisa Jardine thinks not

Dumbing Down: essays on the strip-mining of American culture, edited by Katharine Washburn and John F Thornton. WW Norton, £19.95

My father used to tell us a story about his first trip to New York in the early 1950s. Walking around the city, dazzled by its architecture, and entranced by its postwar self-confidence and easy affluence, he happened to remark to his companion - a titled, aristocratic English woman - how amazed he was that every man they passed wore a freshly pressed shirt. "What do you find so surprising about that?" retorted the lady. "Everyone wears a clean shirt in England, too." "No," countered my father. "In England everyone of your social class takes a daily clean shirt for granted. In this country, apparently, everybody is able to change their shirt every day."

Like that anonymous well-hired lady, the authors of the litany of US books and essays that currently lament the passing of high culture from the American scene also seem to me to be locked into the twilight world of traditional privilege. What makes their position sadder is that a number of those who maintain that American culture is sliding dangerously into decline under the weight of competing cultures and broadening artistic horizons are themselves second-generation Americans - people who have achieved their success within the generous embrace of the North American melting pot.

Two themes preoccupy the contributors to Katharine Washburn and John F Thornton's collection of essays, *Dumbing Down*. The first is that in every area of cultural life - from high art to cookery - the American public is fed a pap of reassuringly downmarket, comfortably low-effort reading, viewing and listening material. This, they claim, is swiftly obliterating a long history of "good" art and literature, thereby chronically undermining an entire society. "American society, for some time fallen into disarray, has somehow begun sliding down a long, steep chute into nullity."

The second theme is that there exists an opportunistic body of unprincipled people within the American cultural establishment who flagrantly exploit fashionable requirements for "accessibility" for their own benefit, and thereby accelerate cultural disintegration. These are the people who are "cashing in on the decline of American culture", and it is their activities that give the collection its subtitle.

As Gerald Howard wrote in the *Nation* in 1993: "It seems to me that this nation's media elite - the people who make the deals, create the networks, conceive, write and produce the shows, the albums, the books - are well along in their own meretricious form of strip mining. They are stripping away what was already a shallow overlay of national taste and intelligence to an incredibly lucrative dive down-market."

Those who argue this essentially New Right position in *Dumbing Down* range from accomplished essayists like Cynthia Ozick and Joseph Epstein to frankly crass

(and significantly poorly-informed) tub-thumpers like Sven Birkerts and Gilbert T Sewall. Freshness and originality are intriguingly lacking throughout, as opposed to the occasional brilliant turn of phrase and slickly seductive argument.

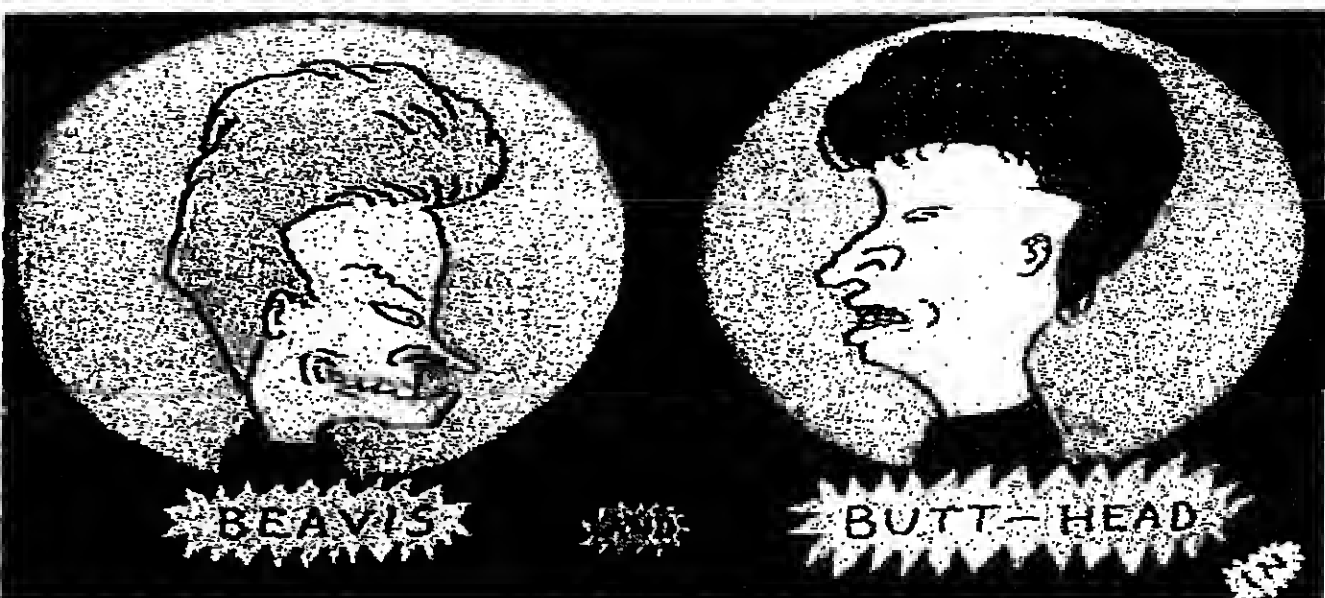
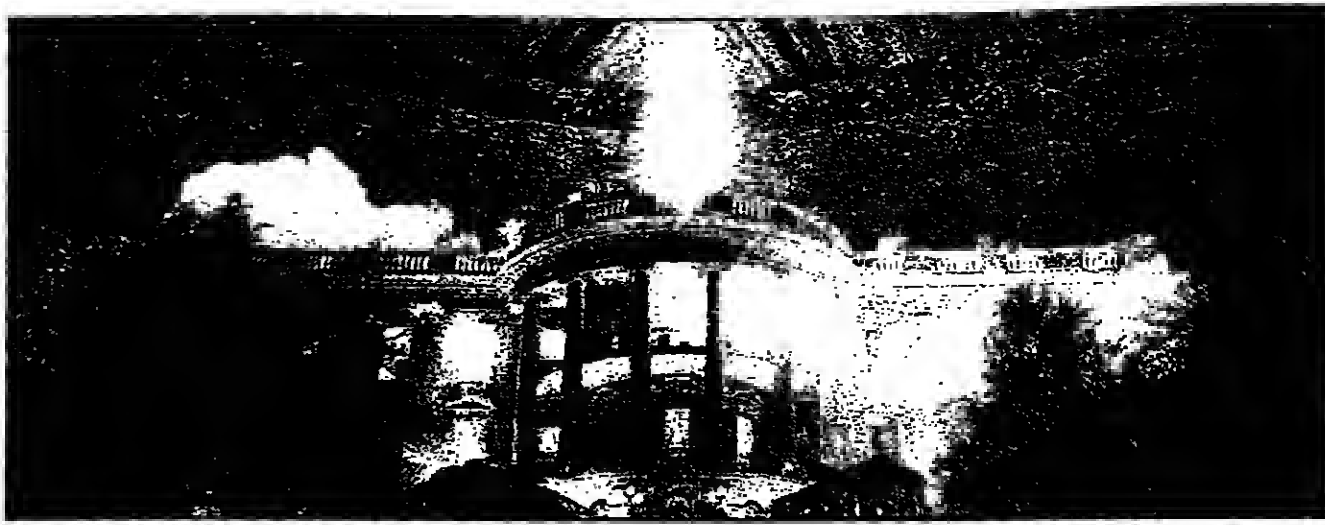
A significant number of pieces here have been recycled over and over again recently, in barely modified forms. And there is little sign of that "alternative agenda" for the "culture crisis" or rescue plan for American culture (as promised on the book's jacket) to counteract the relentless negativity of almost all the essays it contains.

The "dumbing down" argument is at its silliest in pieces like Nahum Waxman's "Cooking dumb, eating dumb", in which the author seriously maintains that we have become a "recipe dependent" culture - unable to cook by our forebears' "common sense" methods and natural understanding of local ingredients. Anyone who wants to sentimentalise my Auntie Sadie's leathery bodied beef, greying overcooked sprouts and soggy potatoes is welcome to, but please don't ask me to sympathise. Give me balsamic vinegar, roquette, sea bream or frangipane any day, even if I do have to read a book to find out how to serve them. The "anything goes" approach of cultural diversity may sometimes seem plausibly to lead, with a scary inevitability, into the murky waters of information overload - but not, surely, in the kitchen.

What is most disturbing about this collection, though, is its contributors' lack of respect for any knowledge outside that which they claim as "canonical" - a smug ignorance of the "non-traditional" subjects against which they fulminate. In "What to do about the Arts", Joseph Epstein argues that the underfunded National Endowment for the Arts in the US is in a state of collapse, as it presides over the cultural bankruptcy of an art scene tyrannised by the politics of race and gender. He writes with all the consummate skill we would expect of the editor of the *American Scholar*.

As an example of this politicised "skewing" of the arts, however, he tells a story of the *Daily Telegraph* telephoning him on the eve of President Clinton's inauguration to ask for an opinion on "the poet Maya Angelou", who had been chosen to read a poem at the ceremony: "I told the reporter I had no opinion of Maya Angelou, that I had read only a few of her poems and thought these were of no great literary interest. I knew of no one who read her."

It does not bother Epstein in the least that these remarks betray straightforward ignorance of contemporary writing. Maya Angelou's reputation spans a broad range of literary forms, among which her autobiographical writings - including the classic *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* - are probably best known. We all, occasionally, have to own up as critics to not having read a particular writer of repute: only those complacently clinging to an uncritical



Symptoms of decline and fall? Beavis and Butt-head, Dumb and Dumber, The Terminator and Independence Day

Great Books tradition would shrug off their own limitations with that inattentive "I knew of no one who read her". In their introduction, the only solution the editors propose for the impasse in which they believe American culture finds itself is to encourage the return of the "educated philistine".

"At least, in their Puritanical way, edu-

cated philistines do in principle stand up for cultural aspiration, for the well-shocked family bookshelf, the series tickets to the symphony, and they express their distaste for the mayhem which they never endorsed and for which they never felt bound to apologize."

So there you have it. The choice apparently lies between narrow-minded bigots who know what they are supposed to like,

and those with an open mind - the people who believe that the man-in-the-street's access to a daily clean shirt might also be a sign of a promising cultural future for us all.

Lisa Jardine is Professor of English at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London University. Her new history of the Renaissance, *Worldly Goods*, is published by Macmillan.

Mind over matter

Roy Porter takes some detours on the road to truth

Hidden Histories of Science, edited by Robert Silvers, Granta, £7.99

Science, they tell us, is hard, rigorous and objective, yet the royal road to truth. But if we peer behind the myths, what do we find? What are the springs of creativity and how does science advance? Robert Silvers has set up a neat experiment by getting five top-flight science authors to put the propaganda to the test. An inspired hint is planted on the first page of the first essay, Jonathan Miller's delightfully punning "Going Unconscious". The "whole thing", he quotes a 19th-century authority as saying, was "a system of collusion and delusion, or an excited imagination, sympathy or imitation".

What the Manchester surgeon James Braid was referring to were demonstrations of mesmerism. But, without much exaggeration, his words might playfully be applied to science itself - at least the science here in question. For Miller's essay traces the tale of artificial trances and the study of them, from the animal magnetism pioneered by Dr Mesmer himself in 18th-century Vienna and Paris, through a succession of later operators who were part magician, part genius. Who was fooling whom with all that transferred suggestion? How could credulity be distinguished from creativity? It was all very puzzling, right up to (and including) the ultimate version of the secret self disclosed by hypnotism: the Freudian Unconscious.

Science, Miller implies in his example of how a pseudo-scientific fad led in roundabout ways to modern psychology, may be like sleepwalking. And what history

suggests, brain science confirms. Most of the time the mind has a patchy awareness of what it's doing, and that applies no less to the revelations of genius than to the high jinks at the picnic's end. Along similar lines, Oliver Sacks suggests that the rise of neurology has also involved a somnolent element. From the early 19th century, neuro-scientists kept blundering upon discoveries whose meaning and use they could not then know. Often these finds were squandered away in the attic of the mind to be rediscovered only much later. Sacks hints at a tendency for the brainwaves of creative individuals to be stifled by the collective constraints of scientific inertia.

Conformism is a theme further developed by Richard Lewontin and Stephen Jay Gould, both of whom examine his in science - how dominant models produce distorted images of how Nature must be and how science should be. Lewontin castigates today's received wisdom that for the biological sciences to be truly scientific they must be reductionist like physics, which means in effect endorsing the "selfish gene" and the notion that all that really counts in life is genetically inherited. Gould critically scrutinises the influential icon of Nature as a "ladder of life" rising from monad to man. In breathtakingly anthropocentric fashion, this myth assumes that man - or, by implication, the Caucasian male - is top of the evolutionary tree. In both ways science may serve to shore up prejudice and political values.

It is left to the historian of science on the team, Daniel Kevles, to put flesh on these controversial bones. Taking modern cancer research, Kevles examines the fate of the theory first advanced by the American Peyton Rous at the beginning of this century: that tumours can be caused by viruses. Each of the pioneers in this story encountered stiff resistance among his peers. First it was denied that tumours could be so caused. Later, after Crick and Watson, it was denied that RNA could generate DNA. Finally, experimenters were denied for suggesting that oncogenes in animal tumours could have anything to do with human cancer. Yet in the end all those convictions came to prevail.

If here we encounter scientific blindness, we also see professional courage and persistence - and a research system ultimately tolerant enough to permit deviant ideas to survive and thrive. Rous was finally awarded a Nobel Prize - at the age of 85! One unexpected benefit from this research trail was the discovery of retroviruses, thus enabling us to solve the mystery of AIDS.

Overall, this book may incinerate a few sacred cows and cut science down to size. But by heing thus humanised, and shown to have close affinities with the wider life of the mind, scientific discovery is rendered all the more remarkable. "Excited imagination" may not be a good epithet for science; but what is beyond doubt is that these fine essays will certainly excite the imagination.

Beyond the fragments

Michael Rosen seeks a story in a tantalising memoir

flickerbook: an autobiography by Leila Berg, Granta, £15.99

In *Reading and Loving*, children's author Leila Berg made the outrageous suggestion that parents cuddling children while reading their books fostered literacy. Indeed, the Leila Berg who appeared in public view in the sixties and seventies was full of outrageous suggestions. In 1968, she made Janet and John own up to their politics. Her own reading scheme, "Nippers", was the first to put early words into the mouths of working-class children and their families.

She got some flak for being vulgar and patronising, but we owe it to Leila Berg that publishers began to take seriously the idea that all children have the right to see their own lives depicted in books. That same year, 1968, she wrote the post-mortem account of Risinghill Comprehensive School in Kings Cross, London. Nearly 30 years on, you can still turn up at parties and find people snapping at each other about it. When Tory ministers rail against the terrible "progressives" in education of the past, then Leila Berg and the Risinghill head teacher Michael Duane are always in their Rogues' Gallery.

In *flickerbook*, she has turned to memoir. The style is more James Joyce than Gerard Durrell, as the text begins with glimpses, sensations, misunderstandings and queries. Even by the end, with the outbreak of the second world war and Berg aged around 30, she is still telling her tale in episodes and reveries.

As the little preface reminds us,

a "flickerbook" is "a series of sequential pictures. When the book is flicked through, you get the illusion of a moving picture." So this autobiography is even more shadowy than most.

Aunts and uncles appear unannounced; one of them has written a play that will be acted in by Sybil Thorndike. Even some family acquaintances of mine put in a fleeting appearance - sadly, a hit too briefly to satisfy. Leila Berg's father spends most of the book glaring and scowling at her. The only reason offered to us is some-one explaining to young Leila that she had a baby brother who died. So we have to do quite a bit of our own surmising in this book.

The setting for most of it is Salford, but not the Salford of Albert Finney. This is Jewish Salford, with Hebrew Class outings, Bobbie Godler's harrows of pickled herrings in the sitting room, and Yiddish used as a code beyond the reach of the children.

The family's destiny is on the up: the unfriendly father has gone from being a teacher to a doctor. Coinciding with Leila's scholarship to Manchester High School, the family moves into a larger house in a posher area.

Berg shows herself as a curious but unsatisfied child. No one explains what's going on. When her mother squashes a flea on the bed-sheet, young Leila thinks that a flea is the black smudge left behind afterwards. Harold Lloyd becomes something medical: a "haroldid". She is told by school friends that her kind drink baby's blood. I

story alive and well, I can report, on the 253 bus in London not six months ago, coming from two young black Christian fundamentalists.) When one of Leila's school friends has a pen-pal in Germany (after 1933), there is a well-meant flutter and scare but no one thinks things are worth explaining in full to these children. As we flick through these episodes, we can perhaps feel her the guiding hand of Leila Berg, giving us a "moving picture", her coherent stance on children's liberation.

Through 1934 to 1936 she becomes a more political and sexual creature. She responds to events in Germany and to her older brother's friends as they come back from Cambridge University. In fact, there is a touch of Wilhelm Reich's sexual political running through the book.

It begins with Leila as an infant finding a pleasant place between her legs, through to her having several lovers among the comrades in the Communist Party. Two of them die in Spain while others - rather absurdly, she suggests - propose marriage almost immediately after the first book.

It's a sensual, musing account, that often suggests rather than reports. Yet each flick of the page finds Leila Berg claiming things for her own: her sexuality, her right to question her parents, or not to be directed along their tramlines, or to learn what she wants. I'm not quite sure that we ever find out exactly why she is like this, but we certainly feel it.

Not so much silence, please

Britain's public libraries are winning the loyalty of a new generation of readers. So let's make a racket to celebrate and defend them, argues Ken Worpole

A week in books

Shortly before the third Thatcher government took a scalpel to the NHS, I interviewed a young thinker at the Centre for Policy Studies. Quick of mind and glib of tongue, he waxed lyrical about patient choice and internal markets. Half-convinced, I watched his ascent with interest. And rise he did - though anyone who pens self-incriminating memos when they bend the rules probably deserves the nickname "No Brains".

As David Willetts' fate confirms, policy intellectuals in Britain often flake when they come too close to office. For two decades, alumni from the Tory think-tanks have withered in the corridors of power; this year, we could well see how much house-room Labour allows to its own finest minds. Even if the answer turns out to be "not a lot", this still looks a good time for the research group Demos to publish an anthology edited by its director Geoff Mulgan, *Life After Politics: new thinking for the 21st century* (Fontana, £7.99).

Demos steers clear of overt alignment, and the selections from its work here cover essays by paid-up Tories as well as by liberals and radicals. Yet it would be idle to deny that the Demos bandwagon has rolled down roughly the same road as the modernisers of the left. Indeed, its style carries echoes of that piquant moment in the 1980s when *Marxism Today* magazine hosted a quick-change act by former revolutionaries who briskly remade themselves as postmodern policy wonks. One of the MT trademarks was reverence for Thatcherism itself: here, Mulgan calls it "a bold project of national renewal which tackled head on many deep structural problems". Oh yes? Many historians now think that the lady's electoral sleight-of-hand masked drift and inertia.

Far from looking ahead, this reflex side of Demos thought harks back to the intellectual modes of the late 1980s; the "globalisation" mantra, adulation for the Pacific Rim, belief that the private sector always gets things right. Mulgan claims that the exhaustion of politics-as-usual condemns us to "gridlock" or "underperformance": the metaphors of a traditional, growth-obsessed progressive.

The Demos papers really shine either up among the Big Ideas, or down among the details. The best close-focus analysis includes three essays co-authored by Mulgan himself: with Helen Wilkinson on young people; with Andrew Adonis on high-tech democracy; and with Robin Murray on ways to link tax to services. Strong broad-brush pieces range from Zygmunt Bauman on "ethics after certainty" to Sam Brittan's foray into evolutionary psychology - proof that Darwin has filled the Top Thinker vacancy left by the demotion of Marx and Freud.

The Demos voice grows firmer the farther it moves from 1980s fads. It may still take the end-of-an-era shock supplied by a new government to break that decade's spell for good. Then, Demos could flourish mightily. But I don't imagine it will ever tell us why the research director calls himself Perri 6. Could he be a relative of R2D2 from *Star Wars*? Or just a very terse cousin of the Six dynasty of Amsterdam? Either way, if he ever re-programmes himself for the old politics, "64MP" would save a packet on those printing bills.

Boyd Tonkin

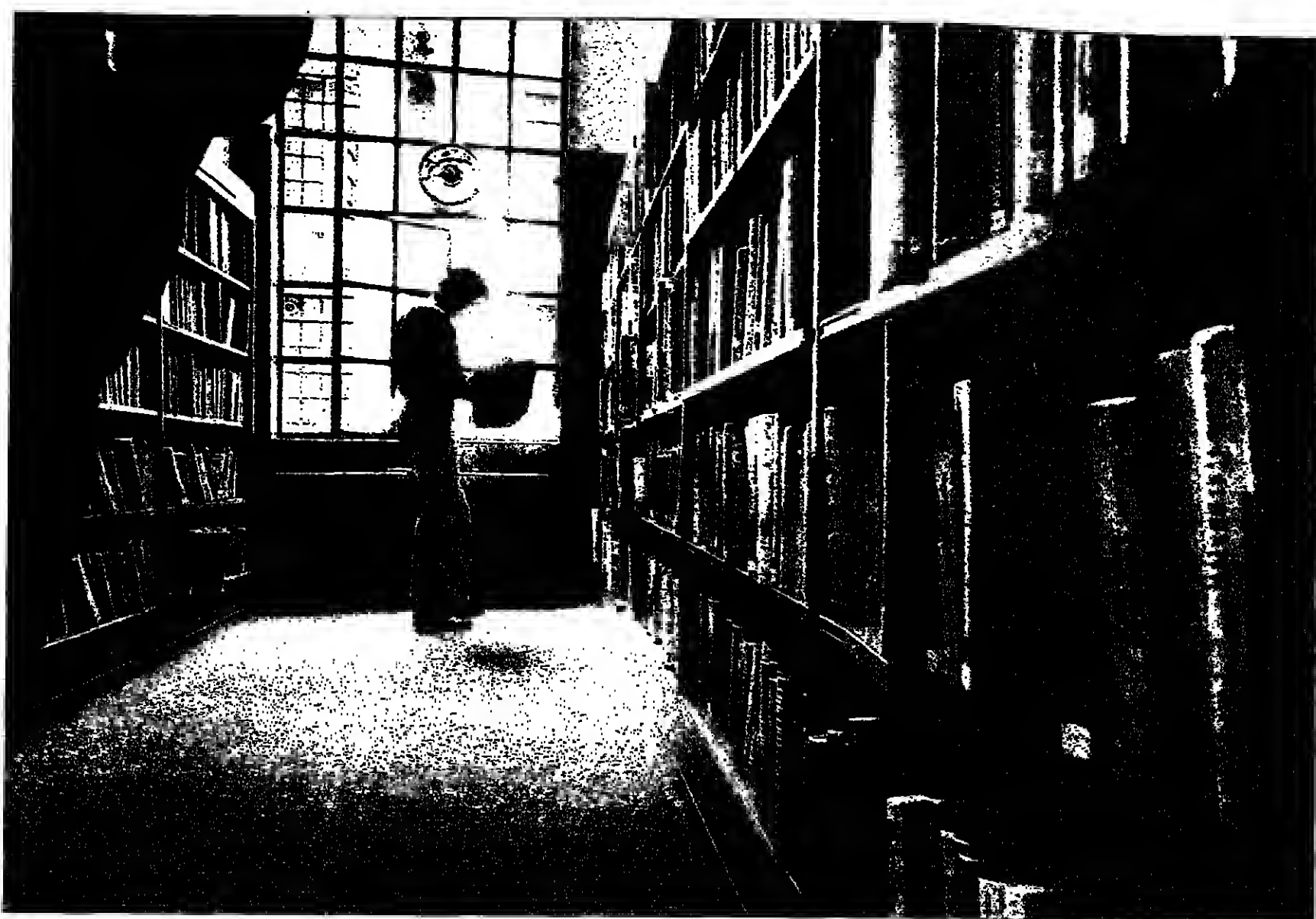
For Seamus Deane's narrator in the spellbinding *Reading In The Dark*, its windows glazed throughout the darkness of Derry and his childhood. For Harold Pinter, according to a new biography, it was "life-giving" in his adolescent years. It, of course, is the public library. Libraries and childhood seem to go together, and a library card has often been the first badge of citizenship for young people. Even today, when the library service seems beleaguered and defensive, a new study has shown that, while adult fiction issues have declined, children's issues rose by a remarkable 21% in the period between 1989 and 1994.

New research from Sheffield University also confirms this continued attachment to libraries among children and young people. An investigation into young people's use of town centres showed that, apart from general shopping trips, the library was the most popular of all places visited. The report of a Department of National Heritage working party, *Investing In Children*, makes a clarion call to take the library needs of young library users children even more seriously. Children's librarianship has always been one strength of the service, in spite of tabloid myths about librarians removing books from shelves for reasons of political correctness. In the real world, Birmingham libraries recently pioneered a Centre of the Child, offering facilities for parents and children that are friendly, accessible, educational, recreational - and all free. It's a great success.

Such levels of popular loyalty should stand the library service in good stead as Labour and Conservative leaders compete with promises of access for all in the wired society. A current bid to the Millennium Commission aims to attract money to put all public library services on the Net.

Yet librarians remain depressed. They still feel that nobody loves them. And, in a way, they are right. While a minor falling-out at a fringe theatre can make national news, discussion of library policy and funding seems enveloped in a wall of silence, apart from unease that libraries open for shorter hours and spend less on books. Both these impressions are true, although the difference in quality from area to area has as much to do with management and politics as money.

Yet no other public or commercial institutions has anything like the same cultural reach. Some 58% of the population claim to hold a library ticket, and 40% claim to use a public library regularly. W H Smith or Waterstones would kill for that market share. Libraries are often the first place that new immigrants feel secure enough to visit as they tentatively move into the public realm. They are uniquely popular with both men and women, young and old, black and white, rich and poor.



A study in success: despite budget cuts and the lure of rival attractions, libraries still outperform every other public institution for trust and popularity

So why does the service remain politically and culturally invisible? Perhaps there isn't a single explanation for this anomaly. My own hunch is that it has to do with the chameleon-like nature of libraries, which merge into their communities so successfully that they disappear.

This assimilation may seem unremarkable, but it's a real achievement. We cannot say the same about theatres, art galleries, museums or even leisure centres, all of which present the sort of barriers to access that public libraries signally overcome. Libraries are a service delivered locally, there is no hierarchy of provision, as in other cultural forms, with a London-based "Royal" or "National" jewel in the crown. (Remember that the British Library

is not part of the public library network). The best libraries are often to be found in the regions - in cities such as Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham - and so elude the metropolitan eye. Another factor that ensures a low profile is the professional culture of those who choose to work in libraries: self-effacing, friendly but reserved, with not a hувie or militant in sight. People trust librarians to be unobtrusive and accepting, a secular clergy.

Librarians will often tell you that people prefer to photocopy sensitive documents such as immigration or adoption papers at the library rather than the commercial copysoph, even if they have to travel further and pay more. This professional ethos, which does librarians proud

in their relationship to the public, does them no good at all in a culture in which cash flow depends on lobbying, self-promotion and the knack of spotting the next funding programme. While you would trust a librarian to help you trace your family history, you wouldn't send one to a Treasury committee to close a deal.

Britain's libraries are just about holding their own in a world of extraordinary change and fragmentation. Yet, as the London study shows, many buildings are in the wrong place (on sites that suited late-Victorian population densities) and are unsuited architecturally for modern needs. The profession is failing to attract new talent, largely because it is unable to offer a high-flyer career structure (librarians, like their books, circulate). Many of the most ambitious library-school graduates now go into commercial information management. Despite this, the best of the new generation of city librarians - Harlepool, Hounslow, Lewisham, for example - have not only doubled or trebled library usage, but have almost single-handedly reversed the decline of town centres. In an age of lifelong learning, the public library could come into its own again, but librarians cannot do it all by themselves. Other hands will need to help move the public library service into the 21st century, and onto the sunny uplands of political esteem.

Ken Worpole co-authored the recent Comedia report, "London: Library City"

Knocking on heaven's crystal floor

Edward Pearce finds that dodgy politics and childish whimsy spoil the charm of an eminent Edwardian

Wisdom and Innocence: a life of G K Chesterton by Joseph Pearce, Hodder and Stoughton, £25

Knocking put it well. Having agreed that there was "any amount of promise in the work" of the young G K Chesterton, he added "Merely as matter of loathsome detail, Chesterton has a bad attack of 'aureoles'". They are spotted all over the book. The aureoles of their equivalents - bits of breathless, ardent, overwritten language - never were got out of Chesterton's system. He formed his style in the decadent 1890s when Wilde was interior-decorating in "red gold". And though he shrank from Wilde, Chesterton, alternately flashy and amorphous, qualifies as a wholesome decadent. Joseph Pearce has written a devoted but decently scrupulous book which comes with the discouraging acclaim of the Chesterton Society. It was an interesting life in exciting times, but 60 years after, it isn't easy to understand his contemporary reputation. Chesterton's poems are either kitsch like "The Donkey"

or bombast like "Lepanto". The prose is a big woolly toy, charming but too charming. The Father Brown books and *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* seem insubstantial today.

He was a nice man, who reached out to children and had in spades the English instinct for animals, but was no good with adults or politics. He was also a soft man moulded by fanatics.

But the softness protected him. He had with Bernard Shaw an incestuous, narcissistic relationship. They flipped light punches and large compliments at each other and rested on each other's gloves. Both were big personalities who would have flourished on television, though Chesterton was your man for sound-bites.

But Shaw has survived his admiration for Stalin and tolerance of Hitler; he flourishes and is performed. Chesterton, who half-admired Mussolini, is just about

in print. So politics are not the reason.

Pearce quotes and excuses Chesterton's anti-semitic remarks and verses, such as: "Oh I knew a Dr Gluck/ And his nose it had a hook/ And his attitudes were anything but Aryan/ So I gave him pork/ That I had upon a fork/ Because I am myself a vegetarian." Pearce says this "was intended primarily as a jocular attack on vegetarianism." Was it now? Admirers stress the child-like aspects of the man. But there was a recurring element that is better characterised as childish.

It would have been a sounder defence of Chesterton to say that the things which (in his own phrase) "leave a bad smell in the mind" derive largely from Hilaire Belloc. Chesterton was truly shocked at "fanatics who murder Jews on the street." Belloc, after an Atlantic crossing among Jewish fellow-passengers, day-dreamed about New York rising to slaughter "the

creatures of the deep". Belloc's anti-Semitism was French Catholic - following the pattern of the *Jeuneuses Patriotes* and the *Anti-Dreyfusards* - but rooted also in the "crucifixers of our Lord" mentality, once virulently expressed across the Catholic Church. The Church Chesterton joined in 1922 was not that of Pope John XXIII.

He was devoted to a Father Vincent McNabb, who inspired him to a good example of Chestertonian gush and rapture: "I have no more doubt that a man like Father McNabb is walking on a crystal floor over my head than I have that Quoodle (Chesterton's dog) has a larger equipment of legs than I have." There is a lot of Chesterton in that letter: endearing charm, self-deprecation and emotional self-indulgence. But from McNabb he took much of his blind hostility to industry and capitalism. It led him at best into a gilded Luddism, but also to greet Mus-

solini's "new Italian government" as "distinguished and divided in a most startling manner from anything to which we are accustomed as capitalism".

Chesterton, unlike Belloc, lacked the rage and malice to be a fascist. The man who sends a telegram saying "Am at Crewe, where should I be?" is too good for such rubbish. But one of his best *apertus* turns back upon himself. "If men cease to believe in God" he said, "they will not believe in nothing. They will believe in anything." As much might be said of those, like Chesterton, who cease to believe in industrial capitalism. His own favoured notion, Distributism, was a cult of smallholders and small craftsmen. It fitted his anti-industrialism. Gothic tastes in art, and his chocolate-box vision of "the age of Faith", the undernourished, hook-and-dissident-burning Middle Ages. And, as an idea, that qualifies as "anything".

Paperbacks

By Boyd Tonkin and Lucasta Miller

The White Boy Shuffle by Paul Beatty (*Minerva*, £6.99) Ignore the cheesy "home-boy" image on the cover: this debut novel is a muscular satire on America's ethnic imbroglio from a young writer who studied with Ginsberg and has already made a name as a performance poet. Beatty's middle-class black hero, Gunnar Kaufman, wises up on LA streets and Boston campuses as he falls foul of every shade of radical fallacy from the Black Panthers to the Black bourgeoisie, but it's the language that keeps his book afloat. A cascading rap of gags and allusions finds room from some inspired silliness, almost as if Edward Lear returned to gig with Ice T.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by L Frank Baum (*Oxford World's Classics*, £4.99). The early works of Lyman Frank Baum, a small-time hustler of America's Gilded Age, didn't suggest very much promise. They included a guide to raising chickens and *The Art of Decorating Dry-Goods Windows*. Then, in 1900, he published *Oz*, which became a hit Broadway musical two years later. The rest is - not history, but one of the few enduring modern myths, as the Yellow Brick Road led to immortality. Susan Wolstenholme's introduction goes beyond the usual psychological readings to point out parallels between Baum's former trade as a peddler of new consumer dreams and the fraudulent Wizard himself, who

gleefully proclaims himself "a humbug". An intriguing New Year treat for all Cowardly Lions, Tin Men and friends of Dorothy.

Slowness by Milan Kundera (*Faber*, £5.99). At 132 pages, this novel offers a miniature version of the familiar Kundera mix of sex and existential analysis. The narrative concerns two parallel seductions which take place in a French chateau, 200 years apart. In an 18th-century pavilion, the indolent Madame de T savours each moment as she manipulates the desires of her young cavalier, meanwhile, in the 1990s, a secretary is fumblingly seduced at a conference. What really matters are Kundera's reflections on the relationships between



Maggie Smith and protégées in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*; from David Bruce's *Scotland: the movie* (Polygon, £14.99)

past and present, public and private, power and exhibitionism, which range in tone from the sublime to the slapstick.

Motel Nirvana: dreaming of the New Age in the American desert by Melanie McGrath (*Flamingo*, £6.99) McGrath's

account of her travels around the American south-west opens a mire to self-consciously, with the author gazing at her reflection in a TV screen. Fortunately, her attitude towards the business of self-discovery becomes more sceptical as she encounters local weirdos. Her analysis of "the

consumer culture's answer to spirituality" - with its auras, technomans and alien abductees - is sharp and funny as it reveals the extent of such credulity.

Wicked Women by Ray Weldon (*Flamingo*, £6.99) It isn't just the women who are wicked in these stories - the men and children can get just as nasty. Adultery and divorce feature strongly, with an unsentimental approach that gets straight to the point. The most ghastly characters - including self-satisfied therapists and horribly competitive men - hover just the right side of caricature. There is an overall sense of control in the writing which goes to show that Weldon is far better at stories than at full-length novels.

The books you listen to

January is the time for good resolutions, fresh goals and new horizons, and sales of "self-development" audiobooks are booming. Joseph O'Connor and Ian McDermott's daunting-sounding *Introduction to Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (Thorsons, 3hrs, £8.99) is genuinely illuminating on the different ways that people think. You may or may not approve of their tips on how to take advantage of such knowledge. The shilliantly convincing Deepak Chopra's *Ageless Body: Timeless Mind* (Random House, 3hrs, £8.99) is rather more woolly and New Age-ish (his celebrity clients include Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Jackson). But there are some useful hints on how to cope with an overloaded memory.

Christina Hardyment

travel & outdoors

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The quest for owls and tiger bingos

A wild goose chase... in winter, in Holland? Caroline Dilke took her binoculars to woods near Harderwijk

"What made you decide to come on this holiday?" Suddenly, like birds with sharp eyes and beaks, the others in the party had turned their attention on me.

"Well, I've always been a keen amateur naturalist - and this seemed an exciting thing to do in December. And I'm learning a lot - about how to look for them, as well as how to identify them, and about migration..."

None of this seemed to satisfy my companions. They'd noted, of course, my small, lightweight binoculars, my non-regulation birdwatching outfit of blue padded coat and trousers (real "birders" wear dark olive green) and, above all, my lack of a telescope.

It had taken me a while to pick up the basic vocabulary: "bins", "scopes", "raptors", "passerines". I am deeply thankful that, on the first afternoon, when the phrase "tiger bingos" was on everybody's lips, I was too cowardly to ask, "What's a tiger bingo?" (It's so obvious... A taiga bean goose is one that's spent the summer in the taiga of the far north, rather than the tundra.)

The five-day holiday had been advertised as "spectacular winter birding within an hour's flight of home". Spectacular it certainly was. Our leader, Arnold van den Berg, a famous Dutch ornithologist, took great care that everyone (including me) got as good views as possible of the birds he charmed out of the woods with a wild, hissing call, or drove us miles across polders and along dikes to scan across wintry, ruffled wastes of water, where thousands of wildfowl bobbed like grains of pepper.

Some of our sightings, I believe, would have thrilled the most blasé. The long-eared owl who stared back at us with golden eyes from a roost in a fir tree 10ft away (we'd invaded a suburban garden); the trip to a wood at dusk to watch the nesting hole of a black woodpecker and wait for it to fly around us with its eerie, mewing call, before climbing in for the night; the white-tailed eagle that put up a cackling flock of 3,000 geese, then it soared above us, as menacing and huge as a wolf with wings.

On the other hand, some of our expeditions were strictly for serious birders. One afternoon we drove hundreds of kilometres through endless, grey-green fields - their monotony broken only by an occasional glasshouse glowing weirdly through the drizzle - hunting the elusive lesser white-fronted goose (there are only 20 in Holland, apparently), scanning flock after flock of other species to detect the white eye ring and slightly curved white facial plate which would distinguish our quarry from the ordinary white-fronted geese (of which we saw countless thousands, grey geese with sooty streaks on their bellies, as if they'd flown over embers and been charred). That afternoon I'd rather have had a walk in a wood to look for more common birds - particularly as we never did find the lesser white-fronts.



Our working day was from 8am to 5pm, the hours of daylight. So after breakfast in our comfortable hotel in Harderwijk (which used to be a port, before the land north of it was claimed from the sea), we'd have a quick look for tree-creepers in the square outside, then set off in a minibus with our bins, scopes and a packed lunch.

Our leader would have caught the latest bird news beforehand, so we'd find ourselves visiting the casualty bay of a large hospital (crested larks) or a motorway service station (rose finches); or stopping in a tiny village where he unsportingly played a tape of a little owl's call, and brought a cross, feathered face to the door of a nesting-box.

Back at the hotel, after dinner came the task of doing "the list". The travel company had helpfully provided a checklist of 189 bird species that we might possibly see during our stay. We saw - some of us saw - 112 of them, plus two rarities that weren't on the list.

What constitutes a "tick"? This was an interesting moral question. If you sight a little bird flitting quickly past, and the leader of the party says it's a hawfinch, do you tick hawfinch? Or do you wait until you've definitely seen for yourself the outline of the stout bill and the white flash on the wings? Clearly, different people drew this line in different places. The Scotsman in our group was particularly rigorous: "Well, I'm not ticking that."

A related question was: what's the distinction between "birding" and "twitching"? Would any members of the party admit to being a twitcher? Their answers were defensive.

"I wouldn't drop everything and go, no. I didn't go to see the harlequin ducks at Givran. But when the buff-breasted sandpiper came to the coast I did go to see that."

"I never twitch outside the county. But I do listen to Birdline. And I'd take the morning off work to see a good bird. My life list for Northumberland is 329."

As always under snow, the woods were transformed. It was as if the weather had staged a giant X-ray, for the white covering on the ground laid bare the bones of the forest. Looking into steep banks from a distance, I could see detail never visible on normal days: hollows, ridges, badger setts, fallen trunks.

Twice, also, I saw a small group of deer: grey, rounded shapes, with a texture indescribably yet definitely different from that of their surroundings. But in that intense frost they had that intense frost advantage, for they were standing still, and I was on the move.

Creep as I might, I could not advance quietly: every footfall on ice-up leaves crackled as loudly as if I had been walking on cornflakes. Attempts at stalking were hopeless; but it was



Even the most blasé "birder" would be thrilled by the sighting of a long-eared owl

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE COLEMAN

"My list for this year is 320."

"I don't know what my list is. I've never counted. I just enjoy looking at birds."

Everyone disapproved of the pure twitcher, who clocks a rare bird, then immediately departs. A "birding" will stay to relish the details of plumage and behaviour, hoping to get a good view of something he may never see again.

"Americans come to me with a list," said Arnold. "So they have to visit in spring, when I know the nesting sites."

Of course, interesting birds may be seen here all year round, but in winter, geese make for the area in their countless thousands. The government

generously compensates farmers for the damage they do (each goose can eat half a kilo of grass a day, as well as treading down and ruining other crops), and about half the Dutch population contribute money for conservation areas. As well as birds, the naturalist can see impressive herds of Przewalski's horses and aurochs - "wild" cattle bred from the gene pool of zoo animals.

Who were we, on this trip? The group included a stockbroker, a scientist with his own biotech business, a retired engineer, a man from "the banking world", the wife of a university lecturer, and a journalist. All but one had a partner - whom we'd left at home. Not because they weren't interested

in birds, but because they weren't seriously interested in birds. Not serious enough to go on a wild goose chase, anyway.

Would I go on a similar trip again? Yes. But not just yet. I'll save up for a 'scope instead, and maybe invest in a less embarrassing birding outfit.

Caroline Dilke travelled with Lunosa Holidays, which organises trips all year round to various places, including India, Majorca, Hungary and Africa. Details from Suffolk House, Northrepps, Norfolk NR27 0LZ (01263 578143). The five-day trip to Holland, which included British Airways flights and everything except drinks, cost £725.

In the grip of a proper winter

Bets on a white Christmas in our area would have been money down the drain; but New Year was another matter. On the last morning of 1996 I awoke to find the valley glowing silver in brilliant moonlight, with a blanket of snow laid smoothly over the ice.

When I left the house at 6.30am, on the way to my deer-stalking grounds, the air was sharp enough to sear my lungs, and the lanes were treacherously personified, even for a Jeep in four-wheel drive. Along most of the 15-mile route the snow was virgin, but when a single set of wheel marks showed that the vehicle ahead of me had performed several figures of eight before hitting a chunk out of one bank, I took things even more steadily.

When snow is lying, it has the effect of advancing daybreak: the light, reflected from the ground, seems to come up earlier, and this, combined with my slow passage, meant that I arrived slightly late on the scene. Deer that had been feeding out on sheltered fields were already back in the safety of the trees.



As always under snow, the woods were transformed. It was as if the weather had staged a giant X-ray, for the white covering on the ground laid bare the bones of the forest. Looking into steep banks from a distance, I could see detail never visible on normal days: hollows, ridges, badger setts, fallen trunks.

Duff Hart-Davis It was fascinating to see evidence of extensive nocturnal activity printed in the snow...

fascinating to see evidence of nocturnal activity printed in the snow. The deer had moved around a good deal, feeding off their favourite bramble leaves. Fox tracks led everywhere - lines of elegant, single prints - and badgers had been digging down into the leaves in their search for worms or insects.

Back in the village, turmoil reigned. People had abandoned their cars and walked to the shop, and the postman, unable to drive up any of the hills out of the valley, was distributing mail by hand.

strong enough to bear the 21 resident greying geese, but any human venturing on to it would have gone straight through.

New Year's day dawned exactly the same; another crunching frost, another diamond-bright sky, the snow still lying, the Siberian wind still blowing, and the cold so intense that ice had formed on the inside of some window panes. Now more than ever I was glad that I had a goodly store of seasoned firewood, ash, oak and beech. When I brought in three basketfuls and let the wood-burning stoves rip, the labours of the summer seemed infinitely worthwhile. The challenge now is to keep ahead by laying in supplies for 1998.

As 20 intrepid starters gathered in the village street for Ron the shop's traditional New Year death march (ultimate destination, the Old Crown), everyone was stamping feet and flapping arms. But once we had moved off into the hills I believe all were agreed, deep down, that it felt natural and right to be starting the year in the grip of a proper winter.

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Simon Calder hits Greenwich on New Year's Eve

Max was planning a New Year's Eve bash. "Turn up any time after eight," he invited. But first I had work to do. "Tonight," I yawned (exhausted for reasons that may become clear in the story below), "I'm going to party like it's 1999."

To establish the best location for a traveller when the digital clock clicks around to 00.00 on 1 January 2000, *The Independent* has a three-year mission: to gauge the party potential in a trinity of poignant points around the world. Next 31 December I may be in Edinburgh, or Panama City. First, though, the place claiming the world rights to zero: Greenwich. When the world is deciding where to welcome the new millennium, the line gouging through London SE10 is an obvious choice: the year 2000 will begin right here – at the leading edge of the sixth Greenwich time signal beep.

Among the scruffy suburbia that comprises south-east London, Greenwich stands alone, fresh and verdant against a background of grey. From east or west, there is no pleasant approach to the birthplace of the Meridian. Your view is hindered by the leaden landscapes of Woolwich or Deptford, whose noble maritime traditions have been disfigured by tower blocks and dereliction. So try to arrive by boat, along Wordsworth's "fair stream" – the Thames – in the manner of the monarchy. Henry VIII and Elizabeth I – whose reign oversaw the creation of Empire – were born in a palace where the Royal Naval College now stands. England's first royal park was created here, extending south from the river to the old plague-pits of Blackheath. Monarchs admired Greenwich not for its natural elegance but for its defensive qualities, a hillside with commanding views over the Thames. And at the brow of that slope, the key to world domination: the Royal Observatory.

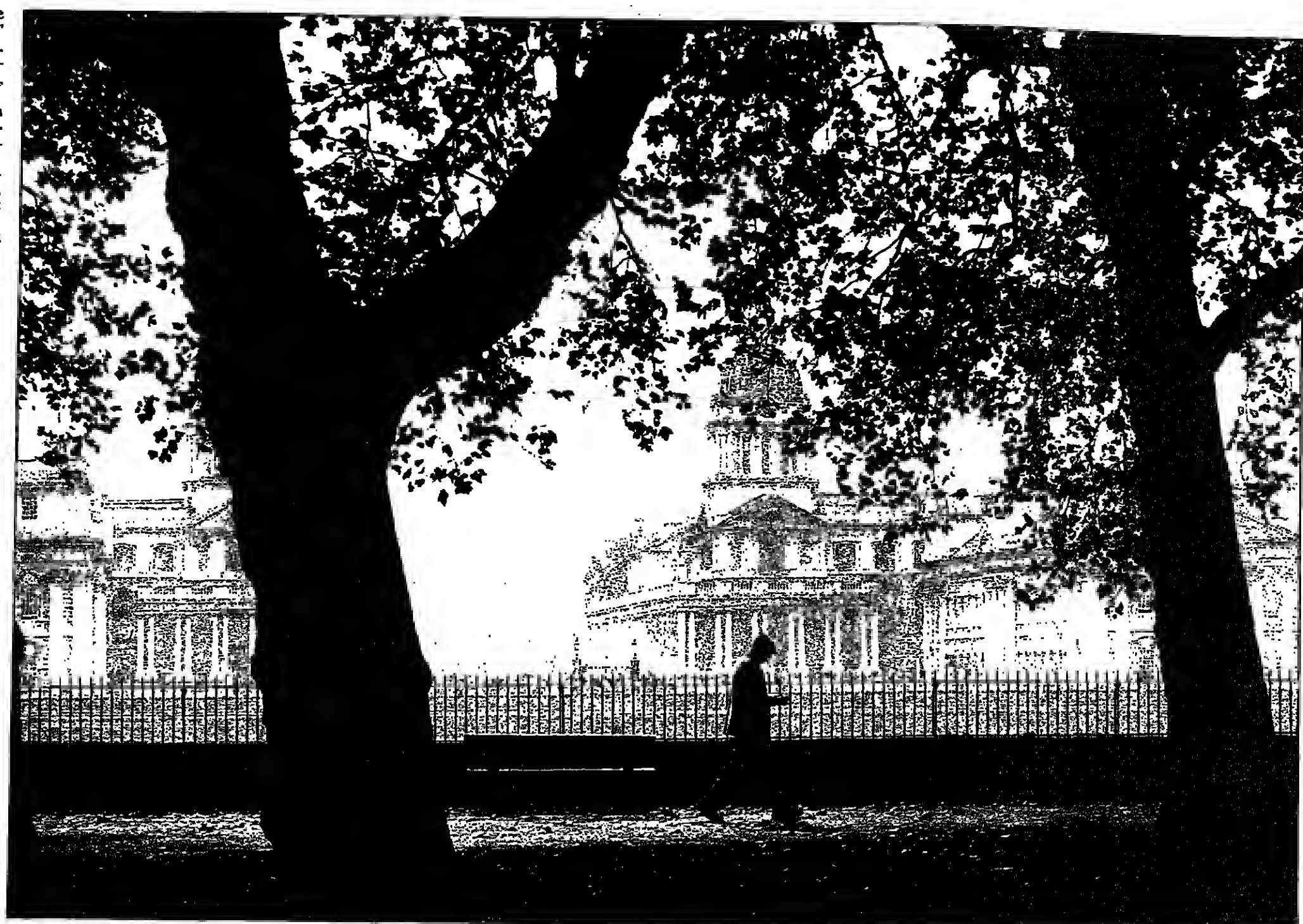
Charles II commissioned Christopher Wren to build the Observatory in order to extend England's grip on the world. The desire to master time and space was no philosophical quest, but reflected the urgent need for mariners to know where they were – and where they'd been, so they could either get back there or avoid it in future. Half a millennium ago, when Columbus first crossed the Atlantic, he employed the trick of staying at a constant latitude – using the stars to calculate the distance from the equator. Two centuries elapsed before mariners could master the second crucial component, longitude.

A walk around the Observatory gives a brief history of the space-time continuum whose adopted abode is Greenwich. Given a starting point and an accurate clock, sailors could fix their location from the position of the sun. The Longitude Act of 1714, sponsored by Sir Isaac Newton, instituted a prize of £20,000 to the maker of a clock that could keep time on a transatlantic voyage. A chronologist named John Harrison proved it could be done with an elaborate timepiece aboard HMS *Deptford*.

Precision throughout the universe is maintained these days by the Greenwich time signal – and by a bright red Time Ball, dropped daily at 1pm from a tower on the roof of the Observatory. Captains may set their timepieces from it, and thereby set a course for pleasure or plunder.

These days most mariners rely on satellite-based Global Positioning Systems to check they are on the Thames rather than the Tiber or the Tigris, but the legacy of longitude has made Greenwich the centre of the world. Since we invented it, we earned the right to install a – no, *the* – Meridian anywhere we jolly well chose. So the global circumference of zero longitude is deemed to slice straight through the middle of the Royal Observatory – which is also the repository of Universal Time.

By now, the sun had set over the spires and skyscrapers of the City of London. Both 1996 and 1



The year 2000 will begin at the place claiming the world rights to zero: Greenwich

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN HARRIS

were running out of time. A final meal had to be taken at the restaurant nearest the Meridian.

The mariners who started off from absolute zero have brought culinary riches aplenty back to Greenwich. New Spain, or at least its component parts, is represented by the Café Sol – a Tex-Mex cantina, I am assured. But both it and the Taste of India restaurant are further from 0 degrees than the Vietnam, just around the corner from Nevada Street. Here I dined on Atlantic salmon and Pacific prawns, washed down with French water and wine.

From the door of the restaurant you may turn left and pay your respects to what was once the fastest ship in the world, the *Cutty Sark* – a clipper perched on dry land at the end of King William Walk. Or you can turn right, as I did, and try to pick your way through Greenwich Park to the Observatory to await the New Year.

You will get no further than a set of heavy and exceedingly well chained gates. As the temperature sped towards absolute zero, I was glad to be obliged to implement plan B: to witness midnight from the pub closest to the Meridian. My Ordnance Survey map indicated that this was to be found along Trafalgar Road (commemorating the lonely Spanish cape where Nelson staged a famous victory). The closest candidate is next door to the Ocean Fish Bar, and is appropriately named Hardy's Tavern; Thomas Masterman Hardy was Nelson's flag captain on the *Victory*, and the officer who kissed the dying admiral.

Anyone picking a pub strictly mathematically knows that it may well be a truly miserable hostelry, with a stropky landlord serving had and overpriced beer. Not Hardy's, where a party was in full swing and an invigorating pint of Spitfire

cost just £1.60. The DJ's music came from lands located with that precious Greenwich longitude: Motown from Detroit, Marley from Jamaica (where New Year's Eve is known by the more resonant and regressive term of Old Year's Night). Only briefly did I wish, uncharitably, that a country could be disinvented, when the Canadian singer Bryan Adams launched into a dirge.

Around the corner is Greenwich Hospital, and the evening shift at casualty had just ended. A convoy of medics, smoking and drinking copiously ("it's the stress", I was assured), steamed in and kindly adopted a stray journalist.

"Why should you want to spend New Year's Eve in a pub in Greenwich?" asked Suzanne, a midwife, between sips of peach schnapps.

"I wanted to find the pub nearest the Meridian."

"Oh. (Pause) Isn't that some kind of hotel?"

The idea of proceeding to Max's party had been long abandoned, but the option momentarily reappeared when Bachman-Turner Overdrive blasted on to the dance floor (providing one further reason to un-discover Canada).

By now much Hardysque snogging had begun. I made my excuses and made for the official millennium site. The location for Britain's year 2000 celebration is not to be found at the Royal Observatory; nor at the pub where "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" was drilling through dancers' skulls. It is the abandoned gasworks at the entrance to the Blackwall Tunnel. Technically, this is Greenwich; indeed the Meridian grazes one edge as it strokes against the Isle of Dogs. But neither Henry VIII nor Horatio Nelson would recognise the frozen waste-cape as their Greenwich, the precious suburb whose line rules the waves.

Hot, bothered and confused

On the fifth day of Christmas Simon Calder found himself in departure lounge purgatory

My chief Christmas cruise memory occurred close to the coast of the Dominican Republic. Captain Robin Renton was standing on a table while a xylophonic version of "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" jingled from a loudspeaker.

Yet this was no tape aboard the good ship *Horizon*. Capt Renton is an airline pilot. The location was Santo Domingo airport, and he was surrounded by a crowd united by an angry desire to be elsewhere. As he yelled above the "you'll go down in history!" climax, I shuddered for the well-intentioned captain.

Just imagine. You are in charge of

a 300-seater aircraft which develops a fault 4,000 miles from home. Instead of approaching Manchester, the beleaguered Boeing is parked at one of the world's less well-appointed airports. And a lot of hot, bothered and confused people are demanding to know what you plan to do about it.

Last Sunday, Aeropuerto Las Americas resembled the year: clapped out and approaching its use-by date. In the crush of the Sunday after Christmas, the airport's inadequacies were revealed. Gradually evident, too, were serious shortcomings by Britain's biggest holiday company – which is why Capt Renton was

exposed to verbal abuse and (much worse) interrogation by video-camera.

The facts are straightforward. We passengers had checked in three hours before the scheduled departure time of 4.45pm. After a 35-minute delay caused by an unspecified technical problem, Britannia flight BY154 pushed back for the eight-hour journey to Manchester and trundled to the end of the runway. But instead of the customary roar of the twin engines – nothing. After 10 minutes, Capt Renton announced that a problem with the air-conditioning systems meant we would return to the terminal. We sat quietly and obediently for another 50 minutes before being told: "The captain has requested that you all leave the aircraft while we run tests."

So far, so unexceptional. Everyone knows that jet aircraft are complex machines, and nobody would wish to fly in a plane which was less than 100 per cent fit. All that was required was for the passengers to be kept informed about developments, and to be treated decently. Since Britannia is the in-house airline of Thomson, the UK's leading tour operator, there was a presumption we would be looked after.

It was, therefore, surprising to find no Thomson rep or airline handling agent on hand to pacify passengers and direct us to a holding lounge. The delay was rapidly ticking towards the three-hour threshold, after which Thomson usually provides "light refreshment vouchers". This humane gesture reflects the fact that passengers will not have eaten for several hours before reaching the airport – and also that most of us had spent or given away our last pesos, since the currency of the Dominican Republic is of limited use in Manchester.

Meanwhile, if we hut knew it, much was going on. Calls were zapping between Thomson's duty office



Aeropuerto Las Americas: still 4,000 miles from Manchester

in London, the Britannia Airways base in Luton, and the airline's engineers based in Sanford, Florida. Hotels in Santo Domingo were put on standby in case an overnight stay was needed.

Yet nobody told us anything for the next two sweaty hours, which were filled instead with grumbles from tired and hungry children. From a contingent that had located a good supply of beer, there was yet more infantile behaviour as the wait degenerated into a hot, cross bunfight.

We might still be there were it not for two passengers who broke aviation rules and walked out across the apron and up the stairs to the 767's cockpit. That they could do this unchallenged raises serious concerns about security at the airport. But, in the short term, there was gratitude among the forgotten masses that they persuaded the captain to explain what was going on.

Slowly, a plan emerged. Two engineers were to be flown down from

Florida by Lear Jet, and would work on the problem while we slept. Take-off was planned for noon the next day, getting us back to the UK before the end of the year. Eight hours after the scheduled departure, the last passengers were checked into the Santo Domingo Inter-Continental Hotel.

Next day, noon came and went without explanation. But a couple of hours beyond that, the Boeing finally lifted off. A flurry of snow flickered in the landing lights at Manchester, where by now it was 2.30am on New Year's Eve – nearly a day late.

What with the costs of accommodation and hiring an executive jet, I estimate that the delay cost Thomson close to £100,000. But among us 300 paying customers, I fear the company has lost a degree of something more precious: respect. The company needs to look closely at how to show the same commodity to clients stranded in a strange land – or it could end up with a red and shiny corporate nose.

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The word off the street

A non-consumer guide to the capital's centre. By Simon Calder

"Hell", wrote Shelley, "is a city much like London". Those of us who reside in the metropolis are disinclined to agree, except in weeks like this. Well – suppose your local high street promised "never-to-be-repeated" prices and persuaded the entire shopping population of the world to the sale. You can imagine the strains on citizens who try to go about their lawful touristic business in places like Covent Garden and Oxford Street, Knightsbridge and the King's Road, only to find they have stumbled into an orgy of conspicuous consumption. Yet just a few yards off the all-too-beaten path, the following escape route will lead you through another London.

'Covert' Garden

The funny thing about the London Transport Museum is that it is quite hard to reach by London Transport – being stranded the wrong side of the Covent Garden shopping plaza from the Tube station, and away from any bus route. Yet it is worth struggling with the 4-Z to locate the covert side of the garden – in order to dwell on a rich, proud past when the capital had the finest public transport in the world, and buses and Tube trains came in deep red splashed with municipal gold.

That era shifts even further into the background tomorrow, when fares rise and London strengthens its lead as the most expensive city in the world to travel around: a single hop on the Tube will cost £1.20. So slip back for a while to the clanking, wheezing heritage of trams and trolley-buses. Open 10am-6pm daily (but Fridays from 11am); adults £4.50, children £2.50.

If you must spend, buy Simon Patterson's "Great Bear" poster, a magnificent spoof of the Underground map where New Cross Gate

becomes Neptune and Aldgate East is replaced by Kate Adie: £9.99 from the LT Museum Shop.

Slipping through Soho

The shelves of the bookshops lining Charing Cross Road draw you towards the east end of Oxford Street, but resist the pulling power of the Virgin Megastore and switch to Greek Street. At the top, just where it opens out to the modest meadow of Soho Square, the House of St Barnabas promises relief for women – not shoppers, but those who need a temporary home and possess "the necessary recommendations". This refuge doubles as London's most enticing entrée into 18th-century domestic life. Twice a week, the doors are flung open to visitors (male and female) who wish to climb the creaking staircase and see the solemnly decorated quarters. The furniture, and the art, are exquisitely unrefurbished. (Open Wednesdays, 2.30-4.15pm, and Thursdays, 11am-12.30pm; admission free, but "donations gratefully received.")

If you must spend, splash out two doors down at an old-time vintners. Milroy's of Soho has a champagne sale on at present, and a bottle of Dry Monopole costs a reasonable £12.25.

Below the line

Oxford Street is now only 200 yards away, but a parallel course will help you elude almost all the shoppers. Hollen Street begins the trail, beneath the pompously Edwardian facade of Heory Heath's Hat Factory. The suffix "of Oxford Street" reveals a strange wannabe tendency among some institutions south of the commercial corridor.

A few doors down, you discover the misnamed Oxford Street Youth Hostel, and the back door of Marks & Spencer. As the thoroughfare



Just a few yards off the all-too-beaten path lies another London: Royal Avenue, off the King's Road

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP MEECH

becomes Great Marlborough Street, the shops begin to encroach. Leading the assault are the mocking half-timbers of Liberty – trimmed this year with hocks of startling mauve. As you slip across Regent Street, hold your course steady along Maddox Street and Grosvenor Street. The surroundings get smarter all the time, but the climax – the grand architectural integrity of Grosvenor Square – is squandered by the squat bulk of the US Embassy.

Then you spill out upon Park Lane, the eight-carriage barrier to Hyde Park; the underground car park here is the place where you have to go if your car was clamped back in Covent Garden.

If you must spend, then dive into Harold Moore's Records on Great Marlborough Street, specialising in second-hand vinyl. A Medium Play Microgroove recording of "Four Serious Songs" by Brahms costs just £2 this week.

Not Knightsbridge

Breeze (or crunch frostily) across Hyde Park, the

first Royal reserve to be open to the proletariat – plus, these days, reckless rollerbladers and careless cyclists. You may wish to slip through the twirly, sub-Narnian gates to visit Apsley House, but beware January's gloom accelerating towards dusk.

Knightsbridge is where the A4 gets caught up in a terminal tangle with bargain-hunters, and is a far-from-pretty sight even when the lights of Harrods are blazing. So sneak along Harriet Walk, a mews that offers a retreat from the din and the discounts. You find it at the back door of Harvey Nichols, and can use it as a short cut to the calmer reaches of Sloane Square. Persevere with the miscellany of building works and delivery platforms to reach the handsome cottages at the end, before you are tipped out on to Lowndes Street and the fringe of Cadogan Place – which leads elegantly down to the land of the Sloane rangers, the eponymous square.

If you must spend, try Spycatcher on Lowndes Street, a counter-espionage store, where you can pick up a hand-held bug detector – "every corpo-

rate security officer should have one" is the catchy slogan.

Trumping King's Road

Until this week, I had not even noticed what happens just before you reach McDonald's. Shortly after you begin the westbound battle along King's Road, Royal Avenue opens up an emergency exit from the street, leading the eye – and the reluctant shopper – down a central reservation almost as broad as a football field. The gracious Georgian terraces escort you south. After a hundred yards you discover, in quick visual succession, a real football pitch, the low grandeur of the Royal Hospital and, beyond, Battersea Power Station. This is a view that is open to all but that few are fortunate enough to grasp – the greatest bargain in London.

If you must spend, turn left along the less fashionable Fimlico Road to the Orange Brewery, a pub that makes its own beer and enables you to toast your success in navigating from WC2 to SW3 with a pint of SW1 or Fimlico porter. No passport required.

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Three capital eating habits

Compiled by Amelia Hill

Dominic Wells, Editor of 'Time Out'

I'm not much of a breakfast-person, but I'm an inveterate luncher: I always have been - I suppose it comes with the job. My favourite place has to be Alfred's in New Oxford Street. It has a good list of proper beers as well as English wines, which are surprisingly drinkable. The menu is pretty good too: the last thing I ate there was rabbit in wine, which was absolutely delicious.

My favourite place for supper has to be The Ivy on West Street, even after all these years. The Ivy used to house the world's most beautiful loo, although last time I went, they were doing something to it, so I hope it's still there. I often combine drinking and eating at The Hope on Tottenham Street, W1. It serves a dozen different sorts of sausage and - the really remarkable thing - a dozen different sorts of mustard with amazing names like 'Dragon's Breath'.

Other drinking dens include the Grove Tavern in Camberwell, which is huge and lovely, the Rising Sun off Tottenham Court Road, and the Windmill in the W1 street of the same name - which is the last unreconstructed pub in London.

Tim Supple, Artistic Director of the Young Vic

I live in South London and am very much entrenched in that area. As far as I'm concerned, the best place for breakfast is a Turkish outfit, Tadmor's on Camberwell Church Street. It's a wonderful place: when you walk in, you are immediately hit by a smell of fresh pastry and coffee. It also sells huge croissants, the biggest you have ever seen. When I eat in there I feel as though I've been transported a long way away. I usually eat a simple lunch

when I'm rehearsing. There is a classic Italian place in Brixton market called Franco's which is the real McCoy. I love to sit there, in the middle of the market, and watch all the people and everything go on around me.

The other place where I love to eat is Marie's Café which is a Thai café close to where I work here at the Young Vic. The café is an unprepossessing place on Lower Marsh, but sells wonderful fresh food. They do three Thai dishes each day, all of them great - there's always a massive queue.

In the evening I often go to Giardino's on Blenheim Grove in Peckham. It's like walking into a little cupboard - everything is wood and it's absolutely tiny. They do great pizzas, pastas, meats and salads here - and with wine, a full meal costs around £15.

Mark McGann, Actor

I go to Banners in Crouch End for breakfast because it's well hip and you can turn up in all your scruff or with kids - it's very relaxed. They sell comfort food here, like bangers and mash which I love because it takes me back to my northern roots.

For lunch, I like Café des Arts in Hampstead High Street. It's very good food for not much money. The Bombay Brasserie in Gloucester Road is good for Sunday lunches - they have a great buffet - although suppers are nice here, too. I like the place because it's spacious - you could take a party of 15 people here and still be private.

Orso in Wellington Street serves the finest Italian cuisine I've ever had. It's very much theatre town here and especially caters for theatre audiences.

As for drinking, I love the Holly Bush in Hampstead: it's run by two Liverpool people so it is really a home from home.



Thai without pretensions - Marie's Café, Lower Marsh near Waterloo

Take five for food

Rhiannon Batten feasts on a dieters' budget

I spent the summer escorting tour groups of young Japanese students around southern England. Everyone wanted to visit London, but with a weak yen (or so they told me). I was under strict instructions to find places where the party could re-energise for a fiver apiece.

Waxy O'Connor's
14-16 Rupert Street, W1
(0171-287 0255)

If you enter this pub from the tiny back entrance on Wardour Street it's like entering an underground Irish glade, with trees poking up through the floor and plenty of old-fashioned nooks and crannies to loiter in. For £4.95 you can feast on mussels or oysters. Or for £3.95 you can sit and gorge yourself on huge chunks of heavy soda bread lavished with fat portions of smoked salmon and sour cream - and still have enough change for a Guinness served by the friendliest bar staff in London.

Wagamama
4 Streatam Street, WC1
(0171-323 9223)

At the ultimate Japanese noodle bar, just along from the British Museum, you sit on long and stylish benches as young, snappy waiters breeze efficiently up and down attending to your every need. From yaki soba at £4.20 to kare ramen (ramen with lemongrass, coconut milk, shrimp paste, ginger and garlic, garnished with tofu, beansprouts, coriander and spring onions) at £4.70, you can't really disappoint your taste buds. The food is not as authentic as a true Japanese connoisseur would ask for, but it is perfect for an upbeat and speedy dinner with friends.

Cranks
17-19 Great Newport Street, WC2
(0171-836 5225)

A self-service vegetarian restaurant dishing up hearty portions of healthy food doesn't sound the most exciting combination for a dazzling evening meal. But Crank's, just around the corner from Leicester Square tube, is fun too. The surroundings are light and bright, the staff friendly and generous with their helpings of delicious dishes. Added to which, you can really stuff

yourself and forget the guilt, because it's all healthy. Typical meals would be aubergine and wild rice gateau with as many different salads as you can munch through, for £3.95. Finish it off with one of their waist-busting puddings such as plum and ginger crumble, £2.20 - if you can fit it in.

Khan's
13-15 Westbourne Grove, W2
(0171-727 5420)

Temporarily convenient for a meal on the way home from an evening's late-night shopping on Queensway, this Indian restaurant is so enormous that you're always sure of being slotted in somewhere. The service is quick and brusque, but you get what you pay for, and for a fiver that means a decent meal. The size of the menu reflects the size of the place, and the 70 or so main dishes all cost around £3-£4.

Ben's Thai Restaurant
The Warrington Hotel, 93 Warrington Crescent, W9
(0171-266 3134)

When you walk into this rambling corner pub you think you must have heard when someone told you that there was a Thai restaurant here, but head up the stairs into the Art Nouveau surroundings, and you realise they were right. For £4.55 you can tuck into Thai classic noodles, rice or stir-fry dishes. It certainly beats the usual pub grub. The other advantage to this place is that you only have to stagger down the staircase after the meal to find a decent pub.

The Little Bay
228 Belsize Road, NW6
(0171-372 4699)

You hardly expect duck *en croûte* to be served up with French flair just off Kilburn High Road, but that's exactly what you get at this little bistro. If you're on a tight budget, this is somewhere you can relax about splashing out on, because the splash needn't splatter very far. It is the kind of place to choose for a romantic, candlelit evening, but is an equally good choice for a small group. Prices from £1.65 for starters and £3.85 for mains. At the moment you can get a three-course meal for £5.50 if you order before 7.15pm.

...and where to stay

By Amelia Hill



The Basil Street Hotel, SW3

London's hoteliers are enjoying one of those rare patches when occupancy levels are high, and are making the most of the opportunity to raise prices (or at least cut discounts). A night for two in a modest establishment can top £100, while for something more glamorous you can easily spend £300.

The area where you stay in London is important and it is worth spending a little more somewhere that won't turn into a scene from a seedy thriller as soon as night falls. There are two main areas that you may prefer to avoid: the roads south and west of Victoria Station, and the streets around King's Cross Station.

Here are some suggestions of decent places to stay, ranging from youth hostels to some of the best hotels in the capital. Wherever you choose, book early to stake your claim.

YHA Hostels

Hampstead Heath, 4 Wellgarth Rd, NW11 (0181-458 9054); nearest tube: Golders Green. A dormitory bed costs £14.40 per night, providing you are a YHA member. If you are not, then you pay an extra £1.55 per night for the first six nights, whereupon you qualify for a YHA card. You can be accommodated in one of the more exclusive parts of London at a snip. Whatever you save by staying here can be redistributed in the expensive and thoroughly fashionable shops.

Highgate Village, 84 Highgate West Hill, N6 (0181-340 1831); nearest tube, Archway. Costs £12.25 with a YHA card. Another beautiful setting, which you might find a relief after too much exposure to the centre of the capital. It is a long walk from tube station, but bus 214 from King's Cross will drop you off five minutes away.

Rotherhithe, Island Yard, Salter Road, SE16 (0171-232 2114). The nearest tube is Rotherhithe, but this is on a part of the system that is presently closed for rebuilding. Instead, take bus P11 from Waterloo station (about 20 minutes). Some twin rooms are available, for £22.75 per person. This is the largest hostel in London and will almost certainly have some free room. Its main drawback is poor public transport.

Hotels

The streets of Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove are attractive in a run-down sort of a way. This is an interesting, Bohemian area that houses a diverse community and the fantastic Portobello market. Try the Demetria Guest House at 9 Strathmore Gardens W8 (0171-229 6709, Notting Hill Gate tube). This small, quiet, family-run guest house offers rooms for a minimum of three nights for £32 per night for a single room or £44 for a double.

The **Holland Park Hotel**, at 6 Ladbroke Terrace W11 (0171-792 0216,

Holland Park tube) has a real fire, comfortable lounge and pretty garden. Accommodation costs £52 and £72 for a single and double room respectively, including a full Continental breakfast.

Another fun area to stay is Covent Garden. The **Fielding Hotel**, 4 Broad Court, Bow Street, WC2 (0171-836 8305, Covent Garden tube) is one of the best places around here and is exceptionally good value: £63 for a single, £80 for a double. Recently refurbished, the hotel is in a pedestrianised yard which is picturesquely lit by gas-lamps.

The Swiss-style **Mornington Hotel**, 12 Lancaster Gate W2 (0171-262 7361, Lancaster Gate tube) charges slightly more: £89 for a single room or £99 for a double including a limitless Swiss buffet after which you'll probably find lunch unnecessary.

A notch up the scale, if you can afford it, is the **Basil Street Hotel**, on 8 Basil Street SW3 (0171-581 3311, Knightsbridge tube) for £130 single/£185 double. This friendly hotel is highly characterful, with individually decorated rooms and the Parrot Club, a woman-only bar in which female visitors can relax.

If the above charges seem steep, consider this: the cheapest room at the **Ritz**, 150 Piccadilly W1 (0171-493 8181, Green Park tube) is £305.50 per night. This does not include breakfast. Prices soar to a mighty £1,111 for a two-bedroom suite. If this is beyond your means, you don't have to stay here: for an extended look at the opulent Louis XVI interior drop in for Afternoon Tea for a bargain £21.

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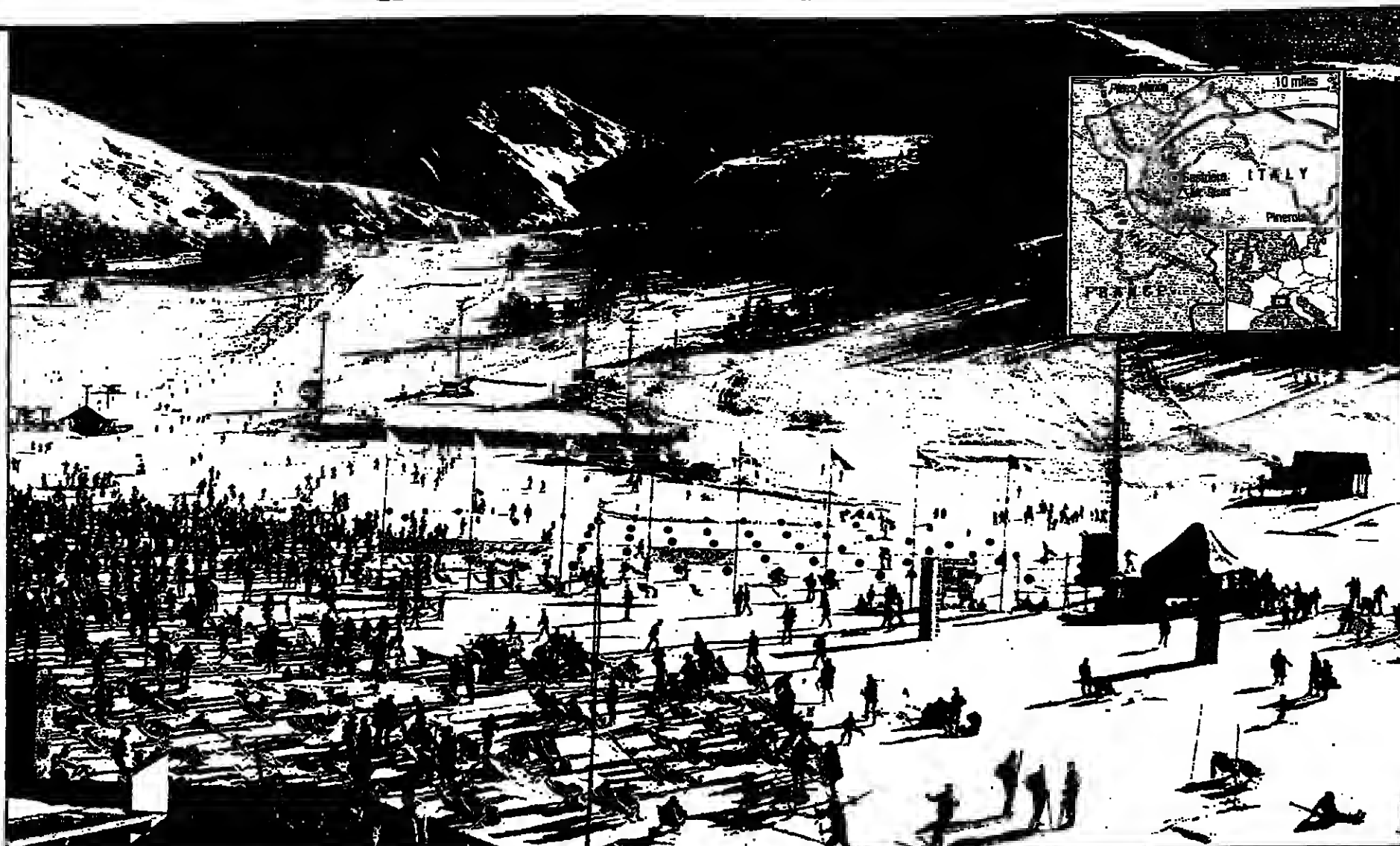
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Where to see an elephant on skis

Stephen Wood visits Sestriere as it gears up to host this year's World Skiing Championships



Sestriere: back in 218 BC Hannibal passed this way with his elephant - hence the 'Anifant' logo for the 1997 Championships to be held here

This morning, the big sign on the main square at Sestriere has changed. Beneath the slogan "Sestriere '97" and alongside the curious logo of an elephant on skis, it now carries the message "29". That's not the temperature; the sign counts down the days to the beginning of this year's World Skiing Championships at the resort, 60 kilometres west of Turin.

If you are skiing in Sestriere this month, you will notice other signs of the coming event. There is a new giant slalom piste running down from Mt Sises next to the famous Kandahar slalom course; a new hotel (for the time being, the athletes' village) has been built near the centre of the resort; and if you arrive from the Turin-Frjus motorway, you will see construction workers desperately trying to finish the Oulx and Cessena bypasses before the opening ceremony on 2 February. They, at least, are working in the comfort of the valley; last month, while Sestriere got its fair share of the early snow falls, the worst construction job in the world must have been erecting - in a blizzard - the 2,000-seat grandstand on the blue run down to Borgata (temporarily reserved for bulldozers) for the finish line of the downhill and Super-G courses.

Sestriere is a special case this year, because of the World Championship. But every summer, when the skiers aren't there, every resort works on improvements for the following winter. If you go back to La Plagne this year, you'll be surprised to find a snowboarding "Snow Park" that wasn't there last season; at Silver Creek, Colorado, you will encounter a new hazard, the fleet of snowbikes it has imported; at Les Deux Alpes, you may spot the new dustbin sheds, "in the shape of miniature chalets and built from traditional materials". At almost every resort you will find improved ski lifts, and more snow cannons.

The 1995/6 season at Sestriere ended on 21 April. By the time this season started, exactly seven months later, the management company Sestriere Spa - wholly owned, directly or indirectly, by the car manufacturer Fiat - had made improvements at four of the group of ski areas it runs. At Sauze d'Oulx, Claviere and Sestriere itself the lifts have been upgraded; at San Sicario, a sound-wave system for dislodging avalanches has been installed; and at Sestriere, the automatic system for firing the snow-cannons has been extended to cover the Monte Motta area.

Sestriere Spa has been improving its lifts since the beginning of the decade, but without increasing their number - which has in fact shrunk from about 100 to 71. The new lifts are faster, and bigger (four-seater chairlifts rather than two-seaters). That's good for the customer, but good for the business, too - replace a couple of small lifts with a big one, and you halve the labour force required. Automatic snow-cannons are also a labour-saving device: they sense when the temperature and humidity are suitable for snow-making (usually at night), and then switch themselves on.

Unlike, say, at Les Arcs, where the decision to install inventories on the slopes was the result of market research, Sestriere does not survey customers' needs. The marketing manager, Sam Laurent, consults the local reps, and the improvement in the area's piste signs was one response to their requests. But Laurent's main concern is what he wants: more hotel beds - of which there are only 7,000 in Sestriere and the neighbouring resorts.

That's why the most important development for Sestriere this year is the World Championship itself: rather than being an interruption in the normal business of catering for recreational skiers (a

factor which makes many resorts reluctant to stage big race events), it is part of the resort's long-term plans. A spokesman for the race organisers, Stefano Coscia, explained that it is hosting the World Championship "to raise the image of Sestriere, in order to bring in Northern European [mainly British] holidaymakers".

Sestriere's proximity to Turin gives it a curious problem. At weekends it attracts crowds of Italian day-trippers, with whom the lifts have to cope; but because it has had limited success in attracting foreign holidaymakers, there are few hotel beds. Sestriere Spa runs only the ski slopes, although for historical reasons (Fiat originally created Sestriere in the Thirties as a holiday resort for its own workforce) it also owns the original hotel buildings. To make full use of its ski lift network, the resort needs more investment in hotel-building and infrastructure, and more foreign customers staying for a whole week.

The first stage of the plan has already worked out: for the first World Championship to be held in the country since 1983 at Bormio, the Italian government chipped in an £8.2m investment (hence the local road improvements). Whether the

event will, ultimately, bring in the non-Italian skiers, I couldn't say - but they wouldn't be disappointed by Sestriere. At first sight, the skiing seems too obvious, with a lot of blues and reds running down the open, north-west-facing slope to the resort; but when you head up into the "Anifant" above Borgata - or, via the cable car, to the under-rated Sauze d'Oulx area - there are some excellent red runs that dash across the snow-bowls and drop down through the trees on wide, sweeping pistes. The other good thing about Sestriere is that it caters for Italians; it's difficult to eat badly there.

Up in the Anifant area last month's blizzards, and feverish with flu, I did a fair imitation of the World Championship logo, the elephant on skis. That figure seems inappropriate for an event involving the world's best ski racers, but it refers to Hannibal, who is supposed to have passed through - well, at least near - Sestriere on his way across the Alps in 218BC. The elephant was originally to bear his name, but a canny Italian company had already registered it. So the curious figure which is counting the days to Sestriere's World Championship has been blessed with an even more curious name: "Anifant".

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سكان الامل

Sowing the seeds of warmth

It may be icy outside, but all is sweetness and light in the seed catalogues. By Anna Pavord

Primroses are blooming everywhere in the garden, with patches of blue Cowichan primulas raised from a strain of Barnham seed. There are still flowers on a dotty red 'Ernest Markham' clematis that has forgotten to check the date on its calendar, and the April-flowering ceanothus 'Trewithen Blue' on the west wall is in full bloom. Doubtless it will end in tears, but if plants are prepared to be optimistic, so am I.

When optimism is in the air, seed catalogues are at their most seductive. Seed merchants do not make their fortunes by telling you how difficult certain things are to grow well. In the pages of their catalogues, all is sweetness and light. Glorious, choice, exquisite, outstanding, lovely, showy and distinctive are the adjectives they reach for. So, increasingly, is 'dwarf'. As we are not getting any closer to the ground ourselves, this is a perverse trend, and I hope it will not go too far. It cannot be more satisfactory to have three squash-faced, miniaturised plants where one decent-sized one will do the job rather more elegantly.

Sweetpeas are always on my shopping list and there are some stunning old varieties still available. 'Wiltshire Ripple' (Thompson & Morgan, £1.59) is one of my favourites, with white flowers veined and very finely edged with plum. Last season I grew one of the most strongly scented of the old varieties, 'Matucana' (T&M, £1.69). It's two shades of purple, the wings slightly darker than the centre. It was introduced into this country around 1700 by a Sicilian monk.

The old varieties don't flower with the same vigour as the modern sweetpeas, or are their flowers so big. But the scent is often stronger and the colouring more intriguing. If you want to pick masses each week, you should include a modern variety such as the unbeatable pale blue 'Charlie's Angel' (Unwins, £1.79) - ruf-



Much in fashion, squashes and gourds are delightfully easy to grow from seed

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW LAWSON

fled, scented, abundant and easy.

The people who oame sweetpeas have a curious obsession with TV stars. 'Terry Wogan' (pink on a cream ground) has been around a long time; 'Esther Rantzen' seems to have disappeared. New this year is 'Anthea Turner', described as 'a very gorgeous combination of candy pink on a creamy-white background, coupled with a wonderful perfume. A good all-round performer.' Or maybe you'd prefer the royal family? 'Black Prince', 'Diana', 'Royal Wedding', 'Royal Baby' and 'Camilla' are all available from Unwins.

Sweetpeas are difficult to work into general planting schemes, and I generally grow them among the vegetables. I had enough this year to cover a couple of hazel

wigwags, too, to decorate the raspberry patch. Sweet peas easily scramble up such supports, though you get the best flowers, with the longest stems, if you train them as cordons on bamboo canes and pinch out all their tendrils.

The star annual of last summer's garden was *Polygonum orientale* or prince's feather (Chiltern, £1.32). It grew at an astonishing rate once it had been planted out, and made a tall (6-8ft) braided, hairy plant with pointed leaves and great tassels of drooping, bright rose-pink flowers. Think of the clustered, poker arrangement of the flowering stem of an ordinary herbaceous polygonum, loosen it and turn it upside down. It still wouldn't be as elegant as this annual histort. Actually, it grew around a variegated aralia, among

equally imposing spikes of the tall white tobacco flower, *Nicotiana glauca*. If you are lucky, it may self-seed. I'm not chancing that, and will raise more plants inside to set out in May.

I didn't grow asters last year, and I missed them. This is one family where short stems are an advantage. Tall asters are often so top-heavy, they collapse unless you stake them. But staked asters look as uncomfortable as gardeners in too-tight collars, so I'm going for 'Comet Improved Mixed' (Mr Fothergill's, £1.45). It's less than 1ft tall, early into flower, resistant to wilt (good, if it really is) and seems to come from a good mix of colours.

Sow the seed inside in late March. It will take from one to three weeks to germinate. Transplant the seedlings into

trays and grow them on under cover until you can harden them off, ready for planting out in May. Use them with clary, blue sea lavender and steely-leaved argyranthemums.

Eschscholzia, or Californian poppy, needs to be scattered direct where you want the flowers to grow. This sounds simple, labour-saving even - less daunting than the mumbo-jumbo about pricking out, hardening off and the rest that dogs gardeners new to the business of seed-sowing.

But it works better in light soil than heavy and it doesn't work at all where there are cats or chickens, unless you net over the patch you have sown. The soil needs to be well raked and bashed down to a fine tilth. The best Californian pop-

pies I find, are the ones that seed themselves. But you have to start somewhere. Try *Eschscholzia lobbiai* 'Moonlight' (95p) new in Mr Fothergill's catalogue this year. It is pale lemon yellow, rather than the bright orange of the standard variety. Full sun and dryish soil will give the best results.

Squashes and gourds are much in fashion at the moment and are blessedly easy to grow. Last year I grew the ornamental 'Turk's Turban' gourd (Thompson & Morgan, £1.99). The fruits are sitting in a row on the window ledge in the sitting room, striped and mottled in yellow, orange, cream and green. I sowed seeds inside on 14 April, one to a 3in pot, and covered them with cling film until the seeds germinated. I set them outside at the same time as I planted out the courgettes. The gourds went in the cold frame, though, with the aubergines. Thompson & Morgan has five different kinds on offer, including the large bottle gourd (£1.59).

Venidium, variegated nasturtiums, tobacco flowers and the blue-trumpeted morning glory were among the annual flowers I recommended this time last year. Anne Dodd of Abingdon thought she would try them, and had mixed success. 'The venidium 'Zulu Prince' were a great disappointment,' she writes. 'They flopped and sulked in a spindly way.' Her nasturtiums 'Jewel of Africa' were 'consumed by blackfly, except for one plant which has been a delight of variegated leaves and yellow flowers all summer'. The tobacco flowers were 'a triumph', except that they didn't have any smell.

But the real reason she got in touch was to heap the kind of praises on morning glory that even catalogue writers scarcely dare attempt. Mrs Dodd trained them up a wigwam of thin canes stuck into a large terracotta pot. The seedlings did their usual teeny-tiny, then 'we opened the curtains one morning in late August to see dozens of heavenly blue trumpets clustered quite thickly up the canes'. By September they were at full throttle. 'The riot of morning glory more than redeemed the failures,' she says. That's the brilliant thing about gardening. There are few seasons when there isn't some triumph to wipe out the little local difficulties.

Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU (01473 688821); Unwins, Hilsdon, Cambridge CB4 4ZZ (01945 588522); Chiltern Seeds, Bortree Stile, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 7PB (01229 581137); Mr Fothergill's, Kenford, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7QB (01638 751887).

Pale skies, bare trees and frosty landscapes

Gina Cowen on the most magical winter gardens to visit

It is cold and bare. The ground is hard. Snow has fallen. The bleak midwinter may not be the most obvious time to visit gardens, but this time of the year has its own magic. With the leaves gone from the trees and herbaceous borders in retreat, new views unfold and underlying structures emerge in the pale winter light. Bare-branched trees, dark green conifers and frosted hedges cast long shadows from the low-lying sun. The statues, monuments, temples and lakes of some of our finest gardens, such as Stourhead in Wiltshire and Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal in Yorkshire, take on a quiet mystery in these fallow months. In the place of bold and myriad colours, beady scents, profusion and plenty there is space, line, stillness.

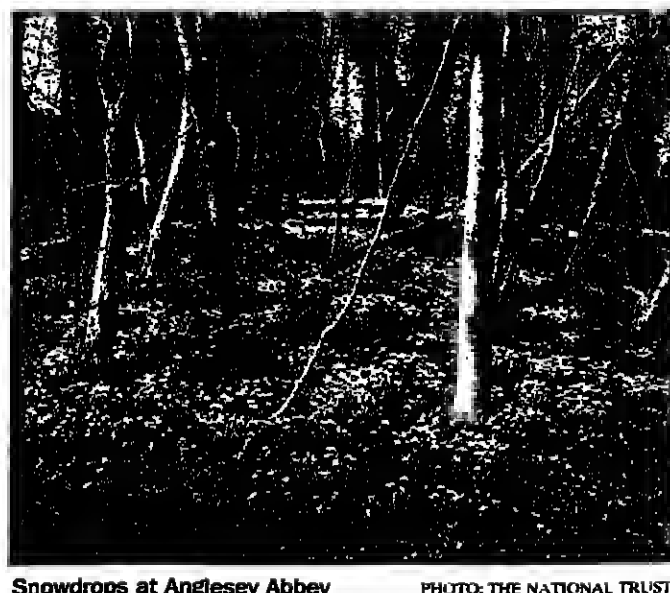
Be prepared, on entering this cool world. Unless you have chanced upon one of those glorious mistakes of an English win-

ter - a mild, clear pearl of a day - wrap up warm and wear good walking shoes. There is nothing worse than trying to have a good time in a state of acute physical discomfort. At Polesden Lacey, one of several National Trust gardens that are open through the winter, it seems the statues have themselves taken this advice and are covered in custom-made protective coats against the cold. The Edwardian gardens, along with the house and estate, were left to the National Trust in 1942 by the society hostess Mrs Ronnie Greville. She is buried outside the walled rose garden and her dogs are in a little cemetery of their own. A small winter garden is sheltered by three Persian ironwood trees and, in early February, is a carpet of bright yellow aconites. There are excellent walks in the grounds, from the gentle Admiral's walk to the wooded hillside beyond where hidden in the trees is Tanners

Hatch, a wonderfully dingle-dell youth hostel from which, any minute, you expect Hansel and Gretel to emerge.

Alice might well emerge from the wonderland of yew topiary at Blickling Hall near Norwich, which even has a cut hedge in the form of a grand piano. Two monumental yew hedges, 370ft long, 20ft high and 15ft wide, line the entrance to the Jacobean mansion. More hedges are at Ickworth Park and Garden in Suffolk, which has a national collection of box, unusual varieties of privet and, hidden amongst the trees in the Silver Garden, large, hexagonal stones poached from the Giant's Causeway.

For fine conifers visit Killerton, where the common Hinoki cypress and Japanese red cedar grow alongside rarer members of the family: the incense cedar and Japanese umbrella pine. These 17 acres of garden, near Exeter in Devon, were first laid out in 1777 by Sir Thomas Acland and his agent John Veitch when the house was rebuilt. Veitch went on to found a famous firm of nurserymen, who searched the world for new plant species and sent many of them home to Killerton. Earlier this century the tradition was continued, with Sir Francis Acland adding new species of rhododendron - Boral



Snowdrops at Anglesey Abbey

PHOTO: THE NATIONAL TRUST

trophies from Captain Kingdon-Ward's expeditions to the Himalayas. From still further afield, huge tree ferns from New Zealand show their fronds in the fernery at Tatton Park in Cheshire. The 60 acres include Italian and Japanese gardens, an arboretum, a pinetum, an orangery and winter-flowering shrubs. If you're braving the chills of Northumberland, flowers of daphne, mahonia, viburnum and hellebore bring interest to the

18th-century walled garden at Wallington, near Morpeth. There is also a fine winter garden at Belsay Hall near Newcastle, though Belsay may be best known for its romantic quarry garden leading to a 14th-century castle in the grounds. Forget the TV and warm sofa, and take a walk on the winter side.

The other side of winter? Spring, with snowdrops as early emblems of its emergence. In their honour, various National

Trust properties that are normally closed during the winter have special 'snowdrop openings'. Two of these open their gates (for a few hours only) on Sunday, 23 February: Belton House, in Lincolnshire (which featured in the recent BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*) and Moseley Old Hall near Wolverhampton (which sheltered Charles II after his disastrous defeat at Worcester in 1651). But snowdrop specialists might prefer to head for Anglesey Abbey near Cambridge where more than 50 varieties 'come to light unexpectedly', according to National Trust files, and can be witnessed on three consecutive weekends in February. The truth is out there. Renewal is on its way, even in the bleak midwinter.

English Heritage: Belsay Hall (01661 881636), National Trust: Stourhead (01747 841152); Polesden Lacey (01372 458203); Blickling Hall (01263 733084); Ickworth (01234 735270); Killerton (01392 881345); Tatton Park (01565 750250); Wallington (01670 774283); Belton (01476 566116); Moseley (01902 782808); Anglesey (01223 811200). Youth Hostel: Tanners Hatch (01372 452528).

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Anyone who bought shares in emerging markets in 1996 has had the by now familiar rollercoaster ride. Those who picked the right markets have done handsomely.

The markets in Russia, Venezuela, Hungary and China were all up by 100 per cent or so in dollar terms. Brazil and Poland both managed about 50 per cent, each. On the other side of the ledger, the markets to have avoided included Chile, India, South Korea and Thailand, which all fell sharply.

The last two are now both at their lowest points for more than three years, reflecting the general waning of investors' enthusiasm for the Asian tigers, and underlining why it is a mistake to think of emerging markets as a single cohesive investment class.

The bald statistics for last year fail to do full justice to some dramatic events on the ground - a



Jonathan Davis

The trick now is to choose between value and fashion

coup in Pakistan, for example, and high political drama elsewhere, including Russia, the biggest potential stock market of them all. In China, the authorities were forced to impose a 10 per cent limit on daily share-price movements after a panic on the Shenzhen stock

market. In Bangladesh, where a wild speculative frenzy sent the local stock market up by 300 per cent in three months before the bubble burst, shares were bought and sold like poultry in the road outside the Dhaka stock exchange - all rather reminiscent, in its way, of Kaffir mania at the turn of the

century, when brokers in the City traded shares in the latest speculative South African mining stocks in the street outside the London Stock Exchange.

Where will the emerging markets go this year? Mark Mobius, the energetic polymath who runs Templeton's highly successful emerging market funds, was in London for a day or so recently en route from (I think) Brazil to Russia.

Templeton is a stockpicking firm, not a "topdown" investor. In emerging markets, as in all its funds, the company sticks scrupulously to the research-led discipline which served its founder, the philanthropist Sir John Templeton, so well over so many years. The philosophy is to buy individual shares that look cheap, not to make big bets on particular markets: to diversify across a broad range of countries and sectors; and to look for bargains wherever they can be

found. The Templeton style is to be prepared to wait for five years, if necessary, for the value of a share to be reflected in the price.

Mobius is still bullish about the outlook for emerging markets. His research team reckons that there is still plenty of value to be found. Hong Kong is at the top of Templeton's buy list at the moment. The market was up by a third last year, but lingering anxiety about the impact of the switch to Chinese rule this year continues to throw up a lot of bargains for value investors. Mobius thinks that the price of many shares in Argentina and Brazil, two other markets which recovered strongly last year, is also very attractive.

Secondly, says Mobius, despite the so-called "tequila effect" - which saw large numbers of US investors repatriating their money after the Mexican devaluation - underlying demand for emerging

market shares is still growing. Not only are increasing numbers of institutional investors being mandated to invest overseas, but many of the leading emerging markets themselves are now starting to generate quite significant domestic demand.

This in turn is helping to reinforce the third key characteristic of emerging markets, which is their low correlation with the established stockmarkets in New York, London and so on. It is easy to think that the flood of money into emerging markets over the past few years is simply a reflection of the exciting growth prospects of many of the countries involved.

That is only part of the story. Just as important has been the powerful diversification argument which has convinced many institutional investors to invest in countries which they would once have avoided like the plague.

If anything, according to Templeton's research, this trend is accelerating, rather than diminishing. Local buyers are increasingly creating speculative bubbles of the kind recently seen in Bangladesh. That not only creates further volatility but also creates the conditions for prices to get out of line with underlying value - ideal conditions, says Mobius, for bargain-hunting outside investors who can distinguish value from fashion.

If he is right, as I suspect he is, it means that the rollercoaster ride is set to continue for a while yet. But don't be fooled into thinking that the risks are somehow no longer there.

If you must play this game, either stick to countries you genuinely know something about, or opt for a broadly diversified fund or investment trust - and prepare to treat the twin imposters with the equanimity urged by Kipling.

Taking care of risks

How can I ensure my family won't suffer if I'm ill?

Welcome to the New Year and to a new advice service. Bryan Fisher, an independent financial adviser, starts a regular column today answering readers' questions. Readers are very welcome to write in for advice, but letters should not exceed 250 words please!

QUESTION: You may think that I am being rather pessimistic, however, please let me explain my circumstances. I am 42 years of age currently and run a profitable consultancy practice. My wife is not involved in the business and is very much a full-time mother looking after our four young children. We have a super home on which the mortgage is currently approximately £90,000.

My concern is that if anything happens to my health I would not be able to meet our monthly financial commitments. I have savings of approximately £7,000 in the building society and about £4,000 in shares. However this would not last too long should I be unable to work.

My biggest concern is that several members of my father's family have suffered from heart problems. I need to look at covering any potential risk that I or my family may be facing. Can you help?

J.D.
Oxford

ANSWER: I think you are being extremely responsible to address any potential problem. The question you have to ask is what would happen to your current standard of living if for example you had a heart attack? You have an endowment mortgage which has life insurance built into it, but this will not pay out on diagnosis of a heart attack.

Almost every expense you currently have will continue. The situation is likely to cause severe financial discomfort in less than six months even taking into account the savings you have made.

Incapacity benefit is now much more difficult to claim than the old invalidity benefit. To qualify for benefits you must be incapable of carrying out "any" occupation and not just your own.

Even if you are successful with your claim the benefit level certainly would not be enough to meet your existing financial commitments. There are two areas for protection that you will need to examine:



1) **Income Protection (PII)**
This cover pays out a tax-free benefit which normally allows you to cover approximately 50-70 per cent of your income. There are various deferment periods which determine when the income starts being paid, following an accident or the onset of illness. The cover should ideally run to the age of 65 and be index-linked so that it will keep pace with inflation.

2) **Critical Illness Protection**
This is a relatively new form of cover, only 5 per cent of people in the UK have any form of cover at this moment. Every year in the UK over half a million people will be diagnosed with either cancer, heart attack or a stroke. Many of these people will become financially dependent upon friends, charities or relatives.

Critical Illness Protection will create a tax-free lump sum on diagnosis of a

range of serious illnesses for example: heart attack, cancer and stroke.

I would strongly suggest that both you and your wife apply for cover and at least cover the mortgage.

This needs to be the absolute minimum sum assured that is applied for and will ensure that should either of you suffer a serious/critical illness, at least the burden of paying the mortgage will be removed.

I would also stress that the insurance companies underwriting procedure on both types of cover is very tough and therefore there is no guarantee of cover being offered.

Bryan Fisher is an Independent Financial Adviser and the Financial Planning Manager at Berkeley Financial Planning in Coventry. He is authorised to give independent financial advice by the Personal Investment Authority. The advice is for guidance only and no action should be taken without obtaining specific and professional advice.

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For Woolwich Building Society, Customer Response Unit, Freeport Office, Regent Square, Glasgow, G2 4AB. To see more details of the PEP Investment in the Corporate Bond Fund, the UK Stockmarket Fund and the International Managed Fund.

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Last year was another satisfactory one for most investors in shares and trusts, with the FTSE index of the top 100 shares recording a gross return of 16 per cent including dividends.

Many unit and investment trusts will have provided a decent return, especially those which invest mainly or wholly in North America, the Far East excluding Japan, and emerging markets.

But the investment industry can never rest on its laurels. Unit trusts on average traditionally underperform the FTSE index which is why tracker funds which follow the index have proved so attractive, combining guaranteed average performance with low overheads.

UK pension funds have also underperformed the index, with an average gross return of only 11 per cent last year.

This is mainly due to the strength of sterling which reduced the value of investments abroad, a cautious approach to US and UK shares, which led many pension funds to be under-invested in both markets and the lower



fear of finance

returns on cash, bonds and property holdings. But pension providers also have a long way to go before they convince investors that they are not being short-changed by small print and special conditions. Most people paying into a personal pension plan or a company plan based on defined contributions now appreciate that the eventual pension they will receive depends entirely on how well the funds are invested, and that all projections depend on assumptions, cautious, average or optimistic, which are unpredictable.

Pension fund managers now have to give a clear statement of the initial charges they deduct to pay commissions before any of the balance is invested. They also have to declare the regular manage-

ment fees which they charge. But the bulk of investors still feel that they are locked into a long-term investment with the fund they first choose, and that they cannot trust fund managers to treat them fairly if they want to switch investments.

Some investors know that when they retire they do not have to buy an immediate annuity, fixed for the rest of their lives from the company which managed their pension. They can now buy their annuity from the company which offers the highest current rate.

They also know that instead of buying an annuity they can reinvest their pension fund proceeds and take income at least until they reach the age of 75. There is, however, a widespread suspicion that some

insurance companies, levy an arbitrary charge on the adjusted value of the funds they release, over which the investor has no control and which does not appear on the list of published charges.

Few know that deferring their annuity and opting for income drawdown will also cost them around 5 per cent of their fund in transfer charges.

There are too many other cases of investments where between the illusion and the reality the shadow falls.

With-profits bonds are a traditional investment for investors who want professional management, and risks spread over a range of sectors and years to give a smoother ride than unit trusts or investment trusts for example, which rise and fall with stock markets.

Bonuses once awarded cannot be lost again and current headline bonus rates of almost 10 per cent look quite attractive.

Norwich Union is currently advertising a gross bonus rate of 10.5 per cent, Scottish Mutual 10 per cent and Commercial Union 9 per cent.

But Kevin Mills, a partner at

independent financial advisers Holden Meehan, points out that bonus rates are not always what they claim.

These three companies charge a monthly policy fee which reduces the gross bonus rate by almost 1 per cent for between five and seven years, and it is the net return which matters to investors. Ask Holden Meehan (0117-925-2874) for a free comparison fact sheet.

We have to mention guaranteed High Income bonds which also claim to return investors' capital provided one or more of the leading stock market indices, usually the FTSE100 or the Dow Jones, do not fall over a five-year period.

Most stress that both indices have shown some growth over any five-year period since 1984. But the Institute of Actuaries has just pointed out that the UK market fell over each of the five-year periods which ended in 1974 to 1978.

Since 1974 there has been a 23 per cent chance of one or other market falling over five years.

Clifford German

Best savings rates

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Direct Line	Instant Savings	Instant	£10,000 5.50
Direct Line	Instant Savings	Instant	£50,000 5.75
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS			
Teachers' BS	Bullion	Postal	£500 4.80
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Scarborough BS	Instant by Postal	Postal	£5,000 5.70
Bristol & West BS	Instant Acc Postal	Postal	£25,000 6.00
FIXED RATE BONDS			
Chelsea BS	POST-1st 20	20 day P	£5,000 6.05
First National BS	High Yield	30 day	£25,000 6.45
Leopold Joseph & Sons	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000 6.22
Leeds & Holbeck BS	Postal Bonds	30/4/99P	£10,000 7.00
FIXED RATE BONDS			
Kleinwort Benson	HICA	Instant	£2,500 5.20
Investec Bank (UK)	HICA 5000	Instant	£5,000 5.25
Halifax BS	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000 4.25
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Paritman BS	Fixed Interest Bond	1 Year	£500 6.60F
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WestWest Bank	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000 7.45F
Investec Bank (UK)	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000 7.20
Birmingham Midshires	Inflation Beater	5 years	£1,000 7.00
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National Counties BS	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000 7.20
West Bromwich BS	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£250 7.00
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS			
Financial Assurance	1 year	£5,000	5.30FN
Financial Assurance	2 year	£3,000	5.90FN
Hambro Assured	3 years	£20,000	6.00FN
Financial Assurance	4 years	£5,000	6.20FN
Financial Assurance	5 years	£50,000	6.40FN
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS			
Northern Rock, Guern	Nova Access	Instant	£25,000 6.30
Northern Rock, Guern	Offshore 30	30 day	£10,000 6.55
Birmingham Midshires	Offshore Fixed	31/1/98	£5,000 6.85F
Northern Rock, Guern	Millennium Bond	1/1/00	£10,000 7.50F
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS			
Investment Accounts	1 month	£20	4.75
		£500	5.25
		£25,000	5.50
Income Bonds	3 months	£2,000	6.00
		£25,000	6.25
Capital Bond (Series J)	5 years	£100	6.65F
First Option Bonds	12 months	£1,000	6.00F
		£20,000	6.25F
Pensioners' Guaranteed Inc Bond (Series 3)	5 year	£500	7.00F
NS Certificates (tax-free) 43rd issue	5 year	£100	5.35F
NS Certificates (tax-free) 5th Index linked	5 year	£100	2.50-1p
Children's Bond	Issue H	5 year	£25 6.75F
P: post only F: fixed rate N: net rate A: All withdrawals subject to 30 day loss of interest			
All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677. 2 January 1997			

Best borrowing rates

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max Fee	Incentive
MORTGAGES			
Fixed rates			
Scarborough BS	0800 590547 0.95 for 1 year	85	0.75% —
Coventry BS	0800 126125 4.90 to 1/1/99	85	£250 —
Lambeth BS	0800 225221 7.45 to 1/1/02	70	£295 —
Variable rates			
Scarborough BS	0800 590547 0.75% for 1 yr	90	—
Coventry BS	0800 126125 4.06% for 2 yrs	85	—
West Bromwich BS	0121 525 7070 5.10% for 3 yrs	75	1% adv rebated
First time buyers fixed rates			
Bristol & West BS	0800 608088 1.95 to 1/10/97	90	£275 —
Universal BS	0191 232 0973 6.45 to 1/2/00	90	£295 —
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500 7.49 to 1/3/02	95	£395 —
First time buyers variable rates			
Staffordshire BS	01902 317317 2.23 to 1/3/98	90	—
Greenwich BS	0181 8588212 4.19% for 2 yrs	95	—
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500 5.74% to 1/3/02	95	£295 Refund valn fee
PERSONAL LOANS			
Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years) With insurance
Unsecured			
Northern Rock BS	0345 421241 12.9H		£112.66
Royal B of Scotland	0800 121125 14.0		£114.78
Natwide BS	via local branch 14.9		£113.15
Secured (second charge)			
Glydeale Bank	0800 240024 7.8	Neg	£3K-£15K
Royal B of Scotland	0131 523 7023 9.0	70%	£25K-£100K
Midland Bank	0800 494999 10.1	90%	£5K-neg
OVERDRAFTS			
Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm APR	Unauthorised % pm
APR			
Woolwich BS	0800 400900 Current	0.84	10.5 2.18
29.5			
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595 Alliance	0.76	9.5 2.20
29.8			
Bank of Scotland	0800 805805 Direct Cheque	—	11.0 —
26.5			
CREDIT CARDS			
Card Type	Min Income	Rate % pm	APR % Annual Int. free
Standard			
Co-operative Bank	Advantage Visa	—	0.64N 7.90N nil 0 days
Capital One Bank	Visa	—	0.797N 9.90N nil 54 days
Robert Fleming/S&P	Mastercard/Visa	—	0.916N 11.50 nil 0 days
Gold cards			
Co-operative Bank	Visa	£20,000 0.50	10.50 £120 46 days
RBS Advantage	Visa	£20,000 0.94N	11.90N nil 36 days
Royal B of Scotland	Visa	£20,000 1.05N	14.50N £35 46 days
STUDENT CARDS			
Telephone	Payment by direct debit % pm APR	By other methods % pm APR	
John Lewis	via store 1.39	13.0	1.39 13.0
Marks & Spencer	01244 581681 1.87	24.8	1.97 25.3
Sears	via store 1.94	25.9	2.20 26.5
APR Annualised percentage rate. B=0 Buildings and Contents Insurance, LTV Limit to public ASU Accident, sickness and unemployment. E Available to comprehensive private insurance policyholders aged over 22 years. H: Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged. N: Indemnity rate for a limited period.			
All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677. 2 January 1997			

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سكنا من الامم

Small is beautiful with Tessa

To cash in or roll over, it's decision time for our favourite investment, writes Clifford German

Maturing Tesses (Tax-Exempt Special Savings Accounts) were the hottest financial property for weeks on end twelve months ago when the first Tessa taken out in 1991 qualified for their tax-free payouts.

Things are a bit different this year. The new crop of Tesses maturing in 1997 were started in 1992, and investors who took out a variable rate Tessa then missed the boat of initially high interest rates which attracted almost £12bn in Tessa in 1991.

The best guess is that something like £5bn worth of Tessa mature in 1997, and the average pay-out for the maximum investment of £9,000 spread over five years will be around £11,500, compared with an average £12,000 for the early birds who invested in 1991.

With fewer Tesses maturing there is less of a scramble to attract the maturing funds, but individual investors still have to decide what to do with their pay-outs. Investors are not allowed to reinvest the interest they have earned on a maturing Tessa, but they are allowed to keep the capital in a (taxable) deposit account for up to six months before deciding to reinvest the capital in a roll-over Tessa.

If last year is any guide around 70 per cent will simply be reinvested straightaway in follow-on Tessa and in spite of the publicity the wide range of performances received, most accounts were rolled over with the same provider, usually their "local" bank or building society, reflecting the inertia affecting long-term savers.

Investors with maturing Tessa they wish to re-invest need to decide two things. Should they take advantage of the freedom to transfer maturing funds without penalties and

shop around for a better rate with a different provider? And should they go for a fixed rate which will not change over the next five years or take a chance on a variable rate, which the provider is free to raise or lower at their own convenience?

The evidence suggests that small providers try harder and offer better rates. The best Tessa which will be maturing in 1997 came from small providers, just as they did in 1996. But only five of the top ten variable-rate Tessa maturing in January 1996 are also in the top ten just coming up for redemption in January 1997, according to Moneyfacts, the data-base providers for the financial services industry.

Hanley Economic Building Society jumps from 49th place a year ago to top place for variable-rate Tessa maturing next month, and will be returning savers a juicy £11,917.62 tax-free on a maximum investment of £9,000 made over the past five years. Julian Hodge Bank comes in second, with £11,804.37, up from fourth in the accounts which matured a year ago.

But the past is not always the best guide to the future. The best provider of Tessa which matured a year ago was Keot Reliance Building Society which paid out £12,400 for maximum holdings in January 1996. In the latest list however it has dropped to 15th out of 90 providers identified by Moneyfacts.

The average return on newly maturing Tessa is £11,491, which is about £500 less than the first Tessa maturities paid out twelve months ago, but the range between best and worst is again over £1,000. Sadly the big clearing banks come out once again as relatively poor homes for Tessa. The TSB (now part of

Lloyds) did best, taking 26th place with an estimated pay-out of £11,613.28. Royal Bank of Scotland takes 56th place, closely followed by Abbey National, but Natwest is only 73rd, Barclays 78th, Lloyds 80th, Bank of Scotland 84th, Clydesdale 85th, Midland 89th and in this list Co-operative Bank, last of all with a pay-out of just £10,839.82. (A year ago it was 69th).

The best current rates on roll-over Tessa are around 7 per cent on variable-rate accounts, and are actually lower than they were earning a year ago, when the best rates ranged from 7.5 per cent to as high as 8 per cent (from Northern Rock). But an esti-

mated 40 per cent of roll-over proceeds went into fixed-rate Tessa in 1996, reflecting the inevitable disappointment that investors in variable-rate Tessa felt over the virtual halving of interest rates payable on the first variable-rate Tessa taken out in 1991 by the time they matured.

The best fixed-rate Tessa currently on offer pay up to 7.5 per cent (from Sun Banking Corporation) for the next five years, which is much the same as they were offering a year ago.

But investors with maturing Tessa in 1997 may well be looking forward to a rise in interest rates over at least two, maybe three, of the next five

years. If rates rise significantly they might well do better to roll over into a variable-rate Tessa in 1997 and keep their options open.

Virtually all providers will charge transfer penalties on savers who want to switch their Tessa in mid-stream.

Charges vary, but they can be as little as £25-50 to get out of a variable-rate Tessa, while anyone trying to get out of a fixed-rate Tessa usually faces substantial penalties of up to 180 days lost interest.

This year, more than ever, it might be worth inquiring what the transfer charges are as well as the rates of interest on offer before tying the money up.

Best variable-rate TESSAS maturing in 1997. (£9,000 invested)

Rank	Provider	£ Maturity Value	Ranking in 1996
1	Hanley Economic BS	11,917.62	49
2	Julian Hodge Bank	11,804.36	4
3	Investec (Allied trust)	11,779.33	9
4	Buckinghamshire BS	11,774.27	12
5	Melton Mowbray BS	11,753.94	5
6	National Counties BS	11,744.68	3
7	Tipton & Cooley BS	11,729.77	14
8	Ourferrina BS	11,728.61	2
9	Vernon BS	11,710.73	21
10	Cheshire BS	11,705.30	18
11	Monmouthshire BS	11,701.51	15
12	Exeter Bank	11,691.94	10

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loose change

Bristol-based adviser Hargreaves Lansdown has produced an up-to-date guide to building society accounts still available which would be eligible for a cash or share bonus if the society is taken over or converts to a bank. Readers can get a free copy by calling 0800-850661.

Specialist traders Beale Dobie who buy and sell second-hand endowment policies are tipping policies with Friends Provident, Scottish Amicable, Scottish Widows and Standard Life as possible beneficiaries from bonuses if the companies convert to public companies. Policies with Scottish Provident, NPI and Scottish Life could benefit from takeover bids.

Portfolio Fund Management plans to market a specialist PEP investing in European funds next month. Call 0800-404418 to register for an initial discount.

Skipper Building Society and General Accident Life have launched an investment account with 40 per cent on instant access paying up to 7.5 per cent gross and 60 per cent in a unit-linked investment bond to generate capital growth. Minimum investment is £10,000.

Natioowide Building Society has raised rates for savers by up to 1.1 per cent. An Instant Access account now earns 3 per cent gross, 90-day notice accounts get 4 per cent, and regular savings and Tessa 6.5 per cent, all on £2,000.

Pensions top demand

Personal pensions will once again be the hottest financial products in 1997, according to independent financial advisers polled by Close Fund Management.

More than 40 per cent tipped personal pensions, compared with 45 per cent in 1996. Just 19 per cent fancied PEPs might be the top product in demand.

PEPs could come into their own presumably if a rush develops to buy before the end of the current tax year, and again at the start of the next tax year by investors who fear that an incoming Labour government could put a ceiling on the total amount

of tax-free assets an investor could accumulate.

Guaranteed products came in equal second most popular product, also winning 19 per cent of the vote. Healthcare and critical illness products won 15 per cent of the vote.

Around 4 per cent of the IFAs tipped income drawdown products as the most popular product this year, down from 6 per cent last year.

The election is their clients' main concern in 1997, according to 30 per cent of IFAs, followed by the possible volatility of the stock market.

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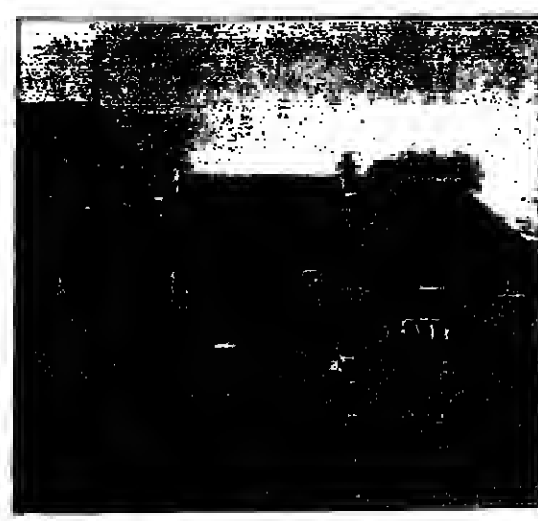
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POLICY PORTFOLIO



Room for all the family: the annex generation of homes. Left, Lilac Cottage, Hamby, North Yorkshire on the market at about £155,000 through GA; top, Old Barn Cottage, Rodmell, near Lewes is for sale at around £215,000 through Humberst; above, Fairlight Cottage, Cirencester, Gloucestershire - details from Hamptons

Let sunshine bring a profit

Geoffrey Pilgrem on Spanish property

In the mid-Sixties, the British began to buy second homes in Spain's Mediterranean and island resort areas. Since then, the main attraction has remained constant: the feeling of well-being generated by 300 or more days of sun a year.

But every year some of the other incentives - bargain-price properties, low "rates" and utility charges, more or less voluntary taxes, and good food and wine for next to nothing - disappear. That's the price of post-Franco progress and levelling-up within the EU. Spain's standard of living now equals our own.

For a couple of decades, the running costs of a mainstream villa or apartment in Spain were considered insignificant. It was the norm for British owners to pay a local gestor, a legal administrator, to settle all regular bills, while kith and kin enjoyed the place a few times a year, leaving it locked and unused until the next visit. But times have changed and, increasingly, owners are prepared to let their properties to cover outgoings.

David Scott, an agent specialising in the Neja region of Andalucía, explains: "I don't sell property as an investment. People buy for pleasure, not profit. But in the late Eighties up to a third of my buyers began to enquire about rental potential to defray overheads. Now they all ask." And how many actually rent out their homes for part of the year? "They all do," he says. "So I now offer my clients a rental service."

This trend is not to be confused with the professional business of investment in holiday accommodation. And it's only a distant relative of peak season relocation - the practice of some canny expats (particularly in Ibiza) to vacate their desirable villas with pools, move into something basic and pocket a few grand a week in rent.

Clearly, not all resort homes have the same letting potential. What helps? As always, that clichéd but brutally accurate phrase applies: Position, Position.

Less than an hour from an airport; on or near a golf course; within sight, sound and an easy walk of the sea; close to amenities but out of earshot of late-night hilarity - these are the unsurprising essentials for successful letting. But they are not enough on their own.

Steve Williams of IPC, which sells property in Tenerife and the Costa Blanca, says that a reliable climate is an obvious factor for easy rental. "The weather on Tenerife is good year-round; so a return of 9 per cent on a new two-bedroom home is achievable. The long season south of Alicante helps rentals there, too." And Mr Williams is clear that grouped houses and apartments in small, low-rise complexes return a higher percentage of the purchase price than most individual villas.

Over the last four years a pueblo of a dozen two-bedroom linked houses has achieved occupancy levels for his owners which Conrad Hilton would have envied: 70 per cent overall, hitting 89 per cent in June, July, August, September, at Easter and at Christmas.

The Marbella-based agent Geoffrey Knight reports that gross weekly rentals on well-located, two-bedroom apartments in peak season are between £400 and £600. Three- or four-bedroom villas with pools fetch about double, and returns of £12,000 to £18,000 annually are common (as they are in Ibiza, with real estate prices and cachet similar to that stretch of the Costa del Sol). Rental commissions are typically 10 per cent of gross income invoiced, and 15 per cent to include full maintenance.

One prediction can be made with confidence. The sun will continue to shine on favoured parts of Spain for 300 or more days a year. The demand for civilised self-catering homes under a blue sky is still on the increase - and, luckily for owners, so are the rental rates.

David Scott International 01279 792162; IPC Property Consultants 0181 642 4376; Geoffrey Knight & Associates 00345 2823059.

Back to the family home

Has the demand for small, box-like homes ended? By Rosalind Russell

Forecasters call it "the Waltons effect". Instead of a millennium marked by 4 million of us living alone, as predicted gloomily by the Government, we could swing the other way. We could see a return to three generations of a family sharing the same house, as they do in the sentimental American TV series, *The Waltons*. Instead of building inner-city one-bedroom flats, goes the theory, developers should be concentrating on five- and six-bedroom houses. It rather scuppers John Gummer's plan for inner-city regeneration to protect green field sites.

But Graeme Leach, of the Henley Centre for Forecasting, says it would depend on the family members getting along. Not everyone has a brother like John-Boy. Not everyone would want a brother like John-Boy.

"We don't think the large growth [of single home owners] the Government is projecting will come to pass," says Graeme Leach, who outlines the Waltons effect in the Centre's newly published *Housing Futures*. "Economic and social factors are intertwined. Rising affluence in the Eighties permitted people to move out of the family home and buy their own. We don't expect the build-up of economic growth to be as strong over the next few years. The

demand for smaller properties could be reversed. We are dubious about the Government's projections and we think they should be toned down."

Two major financial factors could encourage living *en famille*: expensive childcare, and residential care for the elderly, which gobbles up inheritances at £500-plus a week. The two could possibly be resolved by using the equity from the sale of the grandparents' home to buy a bigger house with granny annex. And while parents are at work, children could be cared for by granny. A sprightly granny, of course, may resist this plan.

"Inheritance is the boom that's never happened," says Leach. "So many couples have had to sell up in advance of one of them dying, while the other goes into residential care, estates are not being passed on. At some stage, people may well look at the cost and say 'bang on, this is daft.'"

It may explain a flurry of interest in houses like the one under offer through Hamptons in Broadway, Worcestershire. 110 and 114 High Street are two detached, self-contained cottages linked by a conservatory. The main house has three bedrooms, the annexed cottage two. At offers over £285,000, the price is within the

reach of two generations, each with a property to sell.

This possibility has not gone unnoticed by builders who took the Government at their word in the Eighties - and found themselves burdened with a huge stock of poky studio flats you couldn't give away. They are not about to have their fingers burnt again.

If, however, your family is more Addams Family than Waltons, living alone might seem a better option. And it needn't mean living in a box.

"It's one of the great myths of household projections that single people need small houses," says Roger Humber, director of the House Builders Federation. "The equation is dangerous and wrong. We've had the experience in the Eighties of trying to build specifically single units; now most are unsaleable."

Though 35 per cent of the people who bought flats in Crosby's Brindleyplace development in Birmingham were singles, they wanted at least a second bedroom for friends, family visitors, to use as a home office, or - *in extremis* - for a lodger. More than 60 per cent of the new or renovated flats Cluttons has sold in Docklands have two bedrooms.

"Young single working men are more likely

to find a one-bedroom flat ideal," says Mr Humber. "They are out a lot. As they begin to cohabit they leapfrog the first-time buyers market, buying bigger properties. Increasingly, late 20s and early 30s buy three-bedroom houses. Mr Gummer drew attention to divorce. But for a divorced 35-year-old mother, a one-bedroom flat is the last thing she wants. And divorced fathers want space for their children's access visits."

Mark Wilkins, a 23-year-old duty manager for Bass Tavern in Birmingham, fits Mr Humber's single-man profile. He bought a one-bedroom flat in Crosby's Symphony Court development. "I'm too busy to worry about looking after a bigger place, and anyway I have enough room to fit in my desk and computer. I don't plan to marry in the near future."

Roger Humber sounds exasperated with the theorists who don't work at the sharp end of the property trade. "Small houses are not a neat solution. We reject the idea that people should be crammed into little boxes on an old, industrial city site, which of course appeals to environmentalists."

"It is a dangerous political illusion. We have got to build bigger houses because people value space and privacy."

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The big picture

Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence
Sat 10.45pm BBC2

David Bowie's acting career has had its fair share of lows, including his risible singing-codpiece turn as the Goblin King in *Labyrinth*. But here is one of his best turns, as the British Major Jack, resident of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, embroiled in an exhausting and disturbing battle of wills with his opposite number, Captain Yonoi (well played by Ryuichi Sakamoto, who also composed the infuriatingly catchy theme music). Beautifully dark and troubling.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend
by Steven Poole

"What a fantastic death abyss." I refer to *Changes: Bowie at 50* (Sat BBC2), an interview celebrating the chameleon hollerer's half-century. The mode of eulogy I have adopted is Bowie's own - exclaimed repeatedly as the sepulchral funk of "Heart's Filthy Lesson" grinds its socks off on Bowie's 1996 platter, *Outside*. Few other popular musicians could have made such a sexy, avant-garde noise aged 49, which is presumably why Bowie is getting the full treatment tonight on BBC2, with the interview followed by two of his more successful cinematic outings. I have no idea, by the way, what is meant by "What a fantastic death abyss"; nor, I suspect, does Mr Bowie, since he writes most of his lyrics using a quasi-Burroughsian "cut-up" process.

Despite presenter Alan Yentob's pious attempts to turn the conversation into a duffier lecture on aesthetics for beady pointy-heads, Bowie is in splendid good humour. "I'm not an original thinker," he declares, from under a new ginger-fat-top hairstyle. He reminisces happily about the days with Brian Eno in Berlin, where they glibly founded "the New School of

Preterition", and grimaces at the memory of *Let's Dance* and how it shot him to global superstardom ("artistically and aesthetically my lowest point"). This is all intermingled with familiar and rare archive footage, including a video from Bowie's late-1980s heavy-metal band, Tin Machine. Watch this carefully, because as Bowie gyrates in a beard and sharp suit, scowling into the camera, he looks exactly like Clint Eastwood.

The programme ends with computer screenshots of Bowie's website, driving home the point that he is an artist still managing to gild the cage of his present, rather than settle into the lounge of his past with pipe and slippers. Anxiety about the future, on the other hand, is the *raison d'être* of *Futurewatch* (Sun BBC1), a new series that peers over "the scientific horizon" to confront "the moral issues of the 21st century". Don't worry unduly about how you could peer over a horizon, because even though this programme is fronted by Michael Buerk (of *The Moral Maze* fame), it makes an episode of that radio show look like a fireside symposium between Descartes, Kant and G E Moore. *Futurewatch* has to make some pretty dodgy assump-

tions (like, in 30 years' time we'll be able to download our personalities onto chips) before its arguments can even start. But when they do, they're great fun. My favourite panellist is the eminently sensible Rosalind Miles. "I can't help remembering vaginal deodorants," she chirrups. A propos of what? I won't spoil it for you.

If you're sent into palpitations of futuroshock by all this, and the mimsy Christy of *Batfiskangel* (Sun BBC1) just makes you sick, you can seek refuge in yet another glossy period melodrama, *Rebecca* (Sun ITV). Daphne Du Maurier's potboiler is, as you know, rather like *Jane Eyre* rewritten by a bastard test-tube fusion of Barbara Cartland and Agatha Christie, and so it makes for fruitfully irrelevant television. Charles Dance, lord of the manor is, as usual, graceful and wooden simultaneously (good trick, that), while poor Diana Rigg camps it up something obscene as Mrs Danvers, forever hiding under stairs with an evil grin playing across her lips. Not an ounce of intelligence or subtlety in the direction, but it's very classily photographed, and if you stay the course of Sunday's opener, you'll be good and hooked for the conclusion on Monday night.



The big match

Man Utd v Tottenham
Sun 4pm BBC1

Old Trafford's underoil heating means this clash should go ahead despite the big freeze. It's the first time the two sides have met in the FA Cup for 17 years, but Spurs' current form is woeful, having endured a six-goal drubbing at Newcastle last weekend. Well adrift in the Premiership, this is Tottenham's last chance to salvage something from the season. United's midfield star David Beckham (above) will not be underestimating his opposition: "You never know what will happen. I think it will be a great game."

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

- 7.05 *The Pink Panther* (R) (7719891). 7.25 News and Weather (7103297). * 7.30 *Defenders of the Earth* (7208599). 7.50 *Speed Racer* (R) (2702655). * 8.15 *The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest* (R) (5522278). * 8.40 *The New Adventures of Superman* (R) (S) (2796365). * 9.15 *Live and Kicking* (S) (20119013). 12.12 *Weather* (7241346).
- 12.15 *Grandstand*. 12.20 Football Focus - Gary Lineker previews this weekend's FA Cup third-round matches, which include Manchester United's tricky home tie against Spurs. 1.00 News. 1.05 *Geoffrey Boycott*. 1.15 Darts - First-round coverage of the World Professional Championship at Frintley Green, where number one seed Martin Adams is in action. 1.55 *Speed Skating*. 2.45 *Rugby Union* - Leicester v Toulouse in the semi-final of the European Cup. Plus, highlights of Ireland v Italy at Lansdowne Road. 4.45 *Final Score*. (S) (21368810).
- 5.20 News, Weather (909926). * 5.30 *Local News and Sport* (181181). 5.35 *Cartoon* (7151181). * 5.45 *The Simpsons*. Bart catches Homer on camera in a compromising situation (S) (230013). * 6.10 *Due South*. Benton Fraser returns in a new series of the lovely Canadian-mountie yarns. Tonight we go all Shakespearean and cross-dressing - our hero disguises himself as a schoolmistress in order to track down a missing girl (S) (249217). * 6.55 *Noel's House Party*. Givin' it large with some crucial rhythmic beats, he's a dance-floor wizard - oh no. It's not that sort of house party. The Lightning Seeds bring the "music" (901425).
- 7.50 *The National Lottery Live*. Dale Winton introduces the lads from East 17 (S) (338617). * 8.05 *Casualty*. Aristocrat grief (S) (168100). * 8.55 *News and Sport*. Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (464891). * 9.15 *Accidental Meeting* (Michael Zinberg 1994 US). Made-for-TV distaff rewrite of *Strangers on a Train*, with Linda Gray and Linda Purl the ill-met women who unwittingly take over swapping murders. Predictable (819568).
- 10.45 *Match of the Day*. Highlights of Premiership strugglers Coventry City's tricky FA Cup third-round home tie against giant-killers Woking. Plus, highlights of Arsenal v Sunderland (S) (8157956). * 12.00 *The Frank Skinner Show* (R) (S) (292111). 12.30 *The Creeping Flesh* (Freddie Francis 1972 UK). Interesting Gothic-Victorian horror fable from Hammer: Peter Cushing discovers a skeleton in Borneo which grows flesh in contact with water. Christopher Lee is not so amused (14853).
- 2.00 *Weather* (1177582). To 2.05am.

BBC 2

- 7.10 *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (Edward Sedgwick 1931 US). Second-rate Buster Keaton farce has our man as a vagrant amusingly introduced to high society (3133636).
- 8.20 *Meet the People* (Charles Reisner 1944 US). Little gem of an MGM musical, boasting Dick Powell as wickerplaywright "Swanee" Swanson and Lucille Ball as Broadway star Julie Hampton, with a terrific supporting cast (6294626).
- 10.00 *Chanakya* (S) (9115641). 10.35 *Network East* (S) (6706278). 11.20 *Q Asia* (S) (5941461). 11.50 *A Week to Remember* (6777433). 12.00 *Michael Barry's Choice Cuts* (S) (2172655). 12.10 *Films of the Year* (S) (9769704). * 12.55 *The Bad and the Beautiful* (Vincente Minnelli 1952 US). Kirk Douglas stars, in a role rejected by Clark Gable, as a vengeful and maliciously ambitious movie producer, while starlet Lana Turner, writer Dick Powell and director Barry Sullivan remember how he ruined their careers. A great, sparky, gossipy melodrama to kick off this afternoon's Minnelli double-bill (3443847).
- 2.50 *Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli 1958 US). Disillusioned, demobbed writer Frank Sinatra (of 'Blue Eyes' in one of his more convincing threepenny outings) returns to his home town and gets mixed up with a gambler and a high-spirited floozy (Shirley MacLaine). Stylish yarn with an energetic score from Elmer Bernstein (21038636).
- 5.00 *TOTP 2* (S) (9793758). 5.45 *Darts: World Championship*. Live first-round action from the Lakeside Country Club in Frintley Green, including matches involving number one seed England captain Martin Adams from Market Deeping in Lincolnshire and 1994 champion John Part of Canada (S) (17657723).
- 7.30 *News and Sport*. Weather (778399). * 7.45 *What the Papers Say* (S) (348094). 7.55 *TV* (S) (221520). * 9.00 *Darts: World Championship* (S) (2433). 9.00 *Changes: Bowie at 50*. See Preview, above (426278).
- 10.45 *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (Nagisa Oshima 1982 UK/Jap). See *The big picture*, above (218075).
- 12.45 *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (DA Pennebaker 1973 US). Documentary - or, if you will, "rockumentary" - recording the legendary 1973 Hammersmith Odeon gig which saw Bowie bid farewell to his Ziggy persona forever. Very silly but somehow heroic at the same time, even 20 years later, and new students of Britpop may care to watch the late, lamented Mick Ronson on lachrymose melodies, providing a hallowed, never-bettered template for Bernard Butler, Graham Coxon et al (059037). To 2.00am.
- REGIONS. Wales: 5.45 *Wales on Saturday*. 6.05 *Darts: World Championship*. Scot: 2.50 *The Flying Vet*. 3.10 *The Natural World*. 4.00 *Lairdial* air Calaisaid.

ITV/London

- 6.00 *GMTV* (1022297). 9.25 *Scratchy and Co* (68152365). 11.30 *The Chart Show* (S) (20723). 12.30 *Love Bites* (29297). 1.00 News (96635013). * 1.05 *Local News* (96634384). * 1.10 *World of Women* (9550556). 1.40 *Smoker: Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge 1997* (S) (21639471). 3.50 *SeaQuest DSV* (S) (7471568). * 4.45 *News and Results* (7373181). * 5.05 *Local News* (9595459). * 5.10 *Cartoon Time* (R) (3288051). 5.20 *Cleues* (1138278).
- 5.50 *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*. Raquel Welch guests as an outrageous aunt (S) (222094). * 6.15 *Gladsliders*. Time at last for the ultimate athletic Armageddon, an end-of-the-universe tangle of exploding limbs and electrified perma - oh, no, it's just the Grand Final between Southern softies and Northern hard men (and women) (S) (695407). * 7.15 *Blind Date*. The lovely Cilla (S) (139029). * 8.15 *Family Fortunes*. The lovely Les (S) (996636). * 8.45 *News and Results*. Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (747323). * 9.00 *It'll Be Alright on the Night*. 8. Denis Norden cashes in on the mysterious New Year benevolence of TV commissioners with another excruciating compilation of grinding double entendres and mispronounced polysyllables. There's also lots of clips of cock-ups, of course, from such hardy television favourites as *Baywatch*, *Play Your Cards Right*, *Cheers*, *Laurie R. King* and *Coronation Street* (R) (S) (2487). * 10.00 *Goodbye My Love*. Odd scheduling for a lugubrious drama-documentary about euthanasia. Robert Lindsay stars as Derek Humphry, an Englishman who became a prominent pro-euthanasia campaigner in the USA (codename: Operation Hemlock) after helping his first wife to die. Gwen Humble is his second wife Ann, who assists with her parent's suicide before taking her own life. But Humphry's campaign wasn't in vain, as the state of Oregon finally decided to make euthanasia legal. The question is: how far can a sympathetic, even campaigning film help the cause when it's fictionalising and distorting the truth? (S) (6365). * 12.00 *Smoker: Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge 1997*. Second semi-final (59414).
- 1.30 *Florida Straits* (Mike Hodges 1986 US). Raul Julia is the leader of a mobster group searching the Cuban jungle for a stash of gold buried 20 years earlier during the Bay of Pigs Invasion. With the nice Fred Ward. Dial "a" for alcoholically enchantable (if you must) (63259).
- 3.15 *Steph and Son* (Cliff Owen 1972 UK). Not utterly dreadful spin-off from the TV series. Harold falls for a stripper, and allows Dad to tag along on their honeymoon. As you do. With Harry H Corbett. Wilfrid Brimley. Carolyn Seymour (954747).
- 4.55 *Cool Vibes* (35094037). 5.05 *Coach* (S) (474698). 5.30 *News* (92308). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.05 *Sesame Street* (R) (4225177). 7.05 *Blaker Mice from Mars* (R) (S) (7580926). 7.35 *Sonic the Hedgehog* (R) (2994452). 8.00 *News World Sport* (S) (96487). 9.00 *The Morning Line*. Racing preview (S) (83384). 10.00 *Cartoon*. Football Italia (35162). 11.00 *Biff Giddin* (S) (55926). 12.00 *The Secret Garden* (Fred McLeod Wilcox 1949 US). Margaret O'Brien is the orphan who lives with her widowed uncle (Herbert Marshall) and his paralysed son (Dean Stockwell). Together, the kids nurture Uncle's secret garden back to blooming glory, in this clunking MGM adaptation of the Frances Hodgson Burnett tale (622384). * 1.40 *Racing*. Adverse weather conditions have seen the Sandown Park meeting cancelled. Instead, coverage is of the all-weather meeting at Lingfield Park. Live races covered: 1.45; 2.15; 2.45; 3.15; 3.45 (S) (37656988).
- 4.05 *Ben Casey*. An episode of this ancient black-and-white US medical soap (5948704). 5.05 *Brookside*. Omnibus. Jimmy finally makes his departure, and Georgia finds Nat's ultimatum unbearable (S) (4024452). * 6.30 *News*. Weather (201704). 6.35 *Murder on the Orient Express* (Sidney Lumet 1974 UK). The stars are stuffed into this velvet-plush Agatha Christie adaptation, the best yet filmed, like little city fish in a can. Albert Finney's wonderful Poirot tries to solve a gruesome train-murder. You know the score. Lauren Bacall, Ingrid Bergman, Sean Connery, Vanessa Redgrave, John Gielgud and Michael York (19067471). * 9.00 *The Fragile Heart*. A welcome rapid repeat of this thoughtful three-parter in which Nigel Hawthorne's successful cardiologist undergoes various ethical and emotional trials (R) (7216384). * 10.15 *Klinik* (S) (836433). * 10.30 *Body Snatchers* (Abel Ferrara 1993 US). Ferrara's reworking of the 1950s B-movie is a masterpiece of alien shock-horror in its own right. Meg Tilly and Gabrielle Anwar defend a military base from the monsters... (24668839).
- 12.05 *Space Master X-7* (Edward Bernds 1958 US). Alien-fungus grief in this goggleless sci-fi flick, starring Bill Williams as the scientist examining the space-rock goo. Good title, tho' (6508216). * 1.20 *The Shopworn Angel* (HC Potter 1938 US). James Stewart is a naive Texas soldier who falls in love with actress Margaret Sullivan while on his way to fight in World War One. The stars work some magic with a dire script (197259).
- 2.55 *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann 1948 US). American GI Monty Clift (debuting here on the big screen) helps a 10-year-old Czech refugee (Ivan Janjic) recover in post-war Germany. Intelligent and not over-sentimental drama (910143).
- 4.50 *Mr Don and Mr George* (R) (71261414). To 5.15am.

ITV/Regions

- ANGLIA
As London except: 1.04pm Anglia Air Watch (6240190). 1.10 *Film: Murder in Three Acts* (60483393). 5.04 *Anglia Air Watch* (6670615). 5.05 *Anglia News and Sport* (6419138). 12.45am *Film: The World is Full of Married Men* (101252). 2.25am *Carroll Knowledge* (8232320). 3.25am *Film: Eleni* (609146). 5.25-5.55am *Hell and High Water: The Making of Cuthroat Island* (1177691).
- CHANNEL 3 NORTH EAST/YORKSHIRE
As London except: 1.10pm *Film: Murder in Three Acts* (60483393). 5.10 *Channel 3 North East*. Full Time (5713138). 7.05 *Scoreline* (5713138). 8.04 *York: Local Weather* (857571). 11.10 *The Making of Moll Flanders* (615770). 11.40 *Lifts at the Baths* (228428). 12.10am *Film: The Woman in Red* (505225). 1.45am *Funny Business* (58788). 2.15am *Film: Jack of the Bushveld* (942559). 4.10am *Pushing the Limits: The Making of Eraser* (47951900). 4.40-5.55am *Film: Melody Time* (9269368).
- CENTRAL
As London except: 1.10pm *Film: Murder in Three Acts* (60483393). 5.05 *Central News* (6679886). 5.10-5.20pm *The Central Match - Goals Extra* (5713138).
- ITV
As London except: 1.10pm *Film: Murder in Three Acts* (60483393). 5.05 *ITV News and Sport* (8419138). 12.45am *Film: The World is Full of Married Men* (101252). 2.25am *Carroll Knowledge* (8232320). 3.25am *Film: Eleni* (609146). 5.25-5.55am *Making of Cuthroat Island* (1177691).
- MERIDIAN
As London except: 1.10pm *Film: Ernest Saves Christmas* (60483393). 12.45am *Film: The World is Full of Married Men* (101252). 2.25am *Carroll Knowledge* (8232320). 3.25am *Film: Eleni* (609146). 5.25-5.55am *Making of Cuthroat Island* (1177691).
- WESTCOUNTRY
As London except: 1.10pm *Film: Murder in Three Acts* (60483393). 12.45am *Film: The World is Full of Married Men* (101252). 2.25am *Carroll Knowledge* (8232320). 3.25am *Film: Eleni* (609146). 5.25-5.55am *Making of Cuthroat Island* (1177691).
- S4C
As CA except: 6.05am *Early Morning*. All-Ireland Marathon Christmas Special (4715428). 7.00 *The Magic School Bus* (67799). 7.55 *Hong Kong Phooey* (4765848). 8.05 *King Arthur and the Knights of Justice* (7947206). 11.50 *Homes to Rest* (8958409). 12.55pm *Sir Melbourn* (9268003). 1.25 *Happy Prince* (295436). 2.00 *Faust* (2741480). 5.20 *Brookside* (55470480). 7.00 *News* (980374). 7.15 *News* (980374). 7.30 *Gaelic Games* (971225). 9.05 *Lon Goad* (279799). 9.35 *Clint Night*. The Greatest: Clint Eastwood (640411). 10.05 *AFI Life Achievement Award* (1021715). 11.25-1.30am *Film: White Hunter, Black Heart* (15950041).

Radio

- Radio 1
07.55 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *Kevin Keegan*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Danny Rampling*. 3.00 *Lovegrove Dance Party*. 4.00 *John Peel*. 5.00 *Radio 1 Rap Show*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 2
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 3
09.25 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 4
09.25 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.



Choice

In *Agenda* (11am R4), Laura Cumming finds that lottery money is building fantastic new theatres and galleries, but nobody can afford to put anything on in them; and a special edition of *Music Matters* (with guest panellist Richard Armstrong) (5.45pm R3) asks whether the orchestra has a future.

- George Innes (1/4). 9.25 *Classics with Ray*. Brian Kay examines four different composers' views of Scotland. 9.50 *Ten to Ten*. BBC correspondent Martin Bell talks to Martin Wine about matters of faith. 10.15 *With a Little Help from My Friends*. Frances McKel's drama examines the turbulent relationship which existed between Brian Epstein, The Beatles and the other bands he managed. 11.15 *The Blue Room*. John Fordham examines some of the most popular music of the 20th century. 11.45 *Under the Moon*. Cilla Fringe. By Peter Tinnwood. Carole Franks Brandon takes a holiday in Wales with his Uncle Mort. With Stephen Thorne, Sam Kelly and Christian Rodska. (S). 12.00 *News*. 12.30 *The Late Story: New Year's Day*. By Fay Weldon. 12.45 *Shipping Forecast*. 1.00-6.00am *As World Service*.
- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.

- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.
- Radio 5
08.30 *Breakfast*. 10.00 *David Pearce*. 11.00 *John Peel*. 12.00 *Reggae Dancehall*. 1.00 *John Peel*. 2.00 *Essential Mix*. 4.00 *7.00am* *Charlie Jordan*.

Satellite

- SKY 1
7.00am *WNRP* in Cinemas (89907). 7.30 *Game* (91742). 8.00 *Young In*. 8.30 *James Brown* (48721). 9.00 *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (37618). 10.00 *Quantum Leap* (79261). 11.00 *Star Trek* (71621). 12.00 *WWF* (43520). 1.00 *WWF* (43520). 2.00 *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues* (46758). 3.00 *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (63094). 4.00 *Star Trek: Voyager* (51029). 5.00 *The Hit Mix* (7655). 6.00 *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues* (46758). 7.00 *Harley Davidson* (48721). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 2.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 3.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 4.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 5.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 6.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 7.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 8.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 9.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 10.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 11.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 12.00 *Top Gun* (4704). 1.00

Throne's throes

Today's royal crisis is not just about marital breakdown, infidelity and too much shopping

David Aaronovitch

I was sitting in row Q of the stalls in the New Theatre in Cardiff on New Year's Eve when I realised that Britain was going to become a republic. We were not there to see Harold Pinter's latest play, nor some piece of left-wing miserabilism featuring a wrongly jailed Irishman, a venal politician, a corrupt newspaper tycoon and anal sex. Nor was the audience composed of professional middle classes seeking to be seared by indignities.

Entitled *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the play had an anonymous author, and though the leading male role (Jack) was taken by Su Pollard, this did not seem to be in pursuit of any challenge to sexual or gender stereotypes. In the seats around me were the engineers of Penarth, the garage owners of the Vale and the stolid burghers of Roath. And they and their children were all busy laughing at the Royal Family. At Camilla, at Fergie, at Diana, at Charles, at Andy, at the Queen Mum (crosses herself). Nor were these affectionate jokes, as told about erring friends or popular celebrities. They were contemptuous - cruel, even. These were jokes that were understood and responded to by the very people who might once have been expected to sustain monarchy.

So what? Previous monarchs have survived a mauling. Just look at the cartoons of Gillyray, featuring farting Georges and fornicating Williams! But these are examples from pre-democratic history. Since universal suffrage, there has not been such a crisis of confidence in the monarchy - even at the time of the Abdication. And today's crisis is not a simple product of infidelities, marital breakdown and a bit too much shopping. It is, rather, the exposure of the immense gulf in social attitudes and experience between the subject on the one hand, and the family from which the monarch has to be chosen, plus the gang of ridiculous aristocrats and celebrities with which that family chooses to

surround itself, on the other. My own moment of truth came with Prince Philip's views on gun control. It wasn't that I disagreed (though I did), but that his arguments had managed to be so utterly uninformed by the debate raging around him. In the circles in which the man moves, he simply hadn't heard the case being made for banning handguns. How could this happen?

If, like I was, you are tempted to write this off as a generational problem, consider how our future king is being brought up. He attends Eton College, where he mixes almost entirely with the nobles and the extremely wealthy. His idea of early adolescent joy is not to meet Alan Shearer or be given a season ticket for Manchester United, but to shoot a stag! I'm not necessarily against shooting stags (has to be done, old boy), but where's the fun in it? ("Daddy, did you see when the blood came spurting out of its head? Wasn't it ace?")

And now the heir to the throne is off in Klosters with Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, famous, trust-fund babe. I have nothing against her - somebody has to model for Cartier and I suppose that it's never going to be me. But this is a woman whose magic moments come at events such as Countess Debbie von Bismarck's housewarming party in a converted police station in Chelsea, or when wearing turquoise python kneeboots. She is of the other life, and yet she is important to William's view of the world.

On ITV this week, there will be a two-hour programme on the future of the monarchy, chaired (robustly, I hope) by Trevor Macdonald. Viewers will be invited to ring one of two 0891 numbers and cast their votes for or against the continuation of royal rule. This time, the royalists will win. But not, I suspect, for much longer. Twenty years from now, when asked "where is the monarchy?" the answer will resound around the islands: "It's behind us!"

Tribes who won't see the forest for the sleaze

by Jamie Drummond

Brazil's Amazon rainforest could be likened to America's Wild West of old, where he who had the biggest gun or fattest wallet wrote the rules. I travelled to the Amazon for Christian Aid in September to see whether measures agreed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to protect the forest and its people from illegal loggers, goldminers and settlers are working.

Chief Tamakurale of the Parakana Indians, a tribe that lives beside a tributary of the Amazon in Para state, told me a typical tale: "We do not want the loggers on our lands. They give us diseases, they kill the forest animals and take turtles from the river so we have nothing to eat. They cut down the trees. If the trees go, some of our children may survive, but they will not be Parakana."

This may sound familiar. The Rio Summit, which was supposed to signal a new willingness to take the environment and indigenous rights seriously. Though important conclusions were reached in Rio, much of the aid promised by developed countries at the summit to help developing countries preserve and sustainably use their natural resources has not been forthcoming. And it is ironic that in the rainforest of the host nation, Brazil, deforestation rates have increased from 11,130 square kilometres a year in 1991 just before the conference to 14,896 square kilometres a year in 1994.

In response to this alarming trend in deforestation, the Brazilian government itself launched new measures in the summer of 1996 intended to halt or slow this destruction. The government recognised that much of the problem is caused by mahogany logging in reserves like that of the Parakana, which are legally set aside for indigenous people. The mahogany loggers not only cause damage themselves but also open the routes by which other settlers follow, adding to the destruction.

Logging in indigenous areas is illegal but hard to trace because of the vast size of the Amazon, so Brazil set out its new measures in July to halt the illegal logging - a ban on new mahogany-felling licences and a re-evaluation of all existing licences. Furthermore, the area within any logging concession that can be felled has been reduced from 50 per cent to 20 per cent.



Logging means the future paints a grim picture for Amazonian Indians.

Photograph: Christian Aid/Jamie Drummond

Given the large amounts of money to be made, corruption among the Brazilian environment police is rife

Can these new steps have any impact? One of the biggest concerns is the Ibama (the Brazilian environment police). The Ibama is grossly underfunded: its budget was cut by 40 per cent in 1995 and now it has only 650 agents, 120 land vehicles and 30 boats to patrol an area the size of Western Europe.

Jose Lutzenberger, the former Brazilian Secretary of State for the Environment, summed it up when he said that Ibama outposts were "100 per cent trash can offices of the logging companies". Given the large amounts of money to be made, corruption is rife. We arrived in Para State during the burning season, one of

the dry periods when huge areas of rainforest are burned and cleared for cattle ranching and farming. From our small propeller plane, the forest at first appeared like a green ocean, but soon smoke from forest fires enveloped the view in a grey-green haze. We travelled to the reserve of the Kayapo Indians to locate

trucks carrying illegal mahogany. To reach the reserve, we drove for two hours through the smouldering remains of what just days before had been pristine rainforest. Within minutes, we found a truck carrying about £30,000 of illegal mahogany. The engine was still warm and a cabin door was open - the loggers had seen us

coming and were probably watching from the undergrowth.

Instead of confiscating the vehicle and stolen wood as they are empowered to do, the men from Ibama punctured the tyres and took some photographs. They feared that guns were trained on us from the bushes. One officer muttered bitterly that to do their job properly, Ibama needed the resources to make more journeys like this, and more military back-up, so they would have less to fear from retaliation.

The Parakana know their land has been deforested illegally. We flew over a large deforested area that our GPS (global positioning service) proved was within the reserve.

A timber company called Perachi was fined for illegally logging the area in 1993. Perachi is one of the main suppliers of Brazilian mahogany to the UK market. While the UK's Timber Trade Federation claims that all Brazilian mahogany in the UK is now legally sourced, the Parakana claim that Perachi is still handling timber from illegal logging within their reserve.

"The problem is that, to get around the law, timber companies work increasingly through sub-contractors. It is therefore hard to prove whether companies like Perachi are involved," explains Tarciso Feitosa of Cimi, an organisation supported by Christian Aid to work with Amerindian tribes.

"The government's new legislation, though a step in the right direction, cannot guarantee that mahogany on the market is legally and sustainably sourced. I would ask consumers in the UK to think twice before buying it," he said.

From the evidence I saw, the Brazilian government needs to do more. First, it must put more resources into ensuring that indigenous land rights are respected. Ibama also needs to be better managed and resourced.

Sarah Tyack of Friends of the Earth has a further request: "If the Brazilian government wants to prove its credibility on the environment, it should support a ban on the mahogany trade under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, early in 1997." That would be a meaningful New Year's resolution.

The writer is a researcher for Christian Aid.

Hunting the truth

An Islington-born vegetarian who switches off nature programmes if animals start eating each other is an unlikely candidate to defend fox-hunting. But unlike the vast majority of people who pass judgement, I have one outstanding credential: I have actually done it. And as the anti-hunting lobby again scents a victory with the prospect of a Labour government, and existing hunts dwindle through political correctness and fear of saboteurs, I suggest the lobby is misguided.

It is easy to attack hunting: it makes explicit many of the things we prefer to protect ourselves from - the killing of animals, brutality and blood - all in the name of sport. It is even easier to attack the hunting fraternity: images of posh, pink-coated Sir Buffon-Tufton types swigging from stirrup cups and foaming at the mouth fuel the impression of an unspeakable upper class in pursuit of the uneatable.

Hunting is complex and fiercely emotive - and is most attacked by those least likely to be affected by it. For years, I was shipped out of North London and off to the Southern Irish Wexford Hounds, of which my step-grandfather was once Master. The whole community, from fat farmers to scruffy children on farmland, united to indulge in the closest thing to a townie, have ever seen to community spirit.

As a rather timid urban child, I found hunting gave me bravery; in the adrenalin rush of a moving field, children achieve feats that surprise themselves. As well as courtesy (hunting etiquette is the most stringent of any sport) and a love of the

Townies who would end fox-hunting need to examine their motives, suggests Jojo Moyes. Would the fox really benefit if this traditional country sport were illegal?

outdoors. People who go hunting have a healthier respect for animals than most of my urban neighbours. In our house, you got no supper until your horse was put to bed. Hurling a hound, even accidentally, was the greatest of sins. The argument that foxes need culling is too well known for me to repeat. But in most hunts you don't even see one. Hunting is a means in itself as well as the means to a end. Dare I say it, hunting is fun. And this is what animates the anti-hunting lobby most - that people who hunt are honest about the fact that they enjoy it. Plus, as small groups of people who congregate publicly, they are easy targets for protest. Far less easy to address

is the more widespread way in which we abuse animals bred for killing. Dead foxes look unpleasant? So do slaughterhouses, and so we choose to look the other way. Our meat products are carefully constructed so as to give no hint that they were once parts of living, breathing animals. The only difference is that they are bred for slaughter - and that apparently makes it OK.

After the BSE crisis some farmers admitted that they couldn't afford to feed their affected cattle, and that many were bellowing with hunger. Yet do you see organised protests in support of starving cattle? No, people sit at home eating hamburgers and, when pictures of huntisemen appear on television, condemn them roundly through mouthfuls of gristle.

Personally, I would rather take my chances as a fox than be a battery chicken, dosed up with antibiotics in a wire cage too small for me to turn round in. Simply banning fox-hunting for its cruelty is hypocritical and confused.

And after hunting is banned, and the last bounds and hunters destroyed, what should we consider next? A hunting ban would not lead to foxes being relieved; farmers would simply resort to crueler, legal methods of killing, such as happens in other parts of Europe, where they have been shot and snared almost to extinction.

As a town dweller, I see how easy it is for us to be judgemental about country folk. We keep our dogs in tiny flats, feel guilty when our children forget to feed unwanted hamsters, and then sign annual cheques for membership of the RSPCA.

Let's end the shouting and start the debate

1997 is the year for the Liberal Democrats to seize the initiative, argues Alan Beith

Liberal Democrats in Parliament have been looking forward to the period after the general election, when we expect to have even more MPs than our present post-war record of 26. But we now have an opportunity to exercise influence and really make the difference, before the election. The fact that the Government has lost its majority, and the collapse of the pairing system, have given us a powerful opportunity. I intend that we should take it.

The public is sick of the shouting match that passes for Parliament on TV. They are sick of the sleaze and the arrogance which they see in current politics. Although they want change, they are not impressed by Labour politicians pretending that they can transform the country without spending any money. They want to know what parties stand for.

So, we must use the remaining months of this dying parliament to get our views across. First, we will use the debates and votes on the Finance Bill to set our priority for investment in education, and we will call on other politicians to stand up and be counted. If they say they back education, then they must vote for the resources it needs.

Secondly, we will use our votes to stop the Government from pushing through illiberal measures which Labour, in its desperation not to lose again, will not dare to oppose. We will continue to insist on parliamentary debate on civil liberties issues over which Labour are too ready to let the Government have an easy ride. We will oppose government plans which could require every working citizen to produce a certificate showing whether they have ever had a criminal conviction. We will oppose the ludicrously expensive plan to divert billions of pounds into prison buildings, when the money is needed to prevent crimes from being carried out in the first place. We will not be satisfied with leaving chief constables to authorise bugging activity by members of their own police forces. The Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords have already demonstrated that we are an effective opposition on many such issues.

Thirdly, we will stand, virtually alone, for a

national and progressive approach to Britain's role in Europe. We have already got a Liberal Democrat resolution passed by the House of Commons demanding a referendum on constitutional change in Europe: we will press that demand, and we will put the neglected case for stronger British participation in a more democratic Europe.

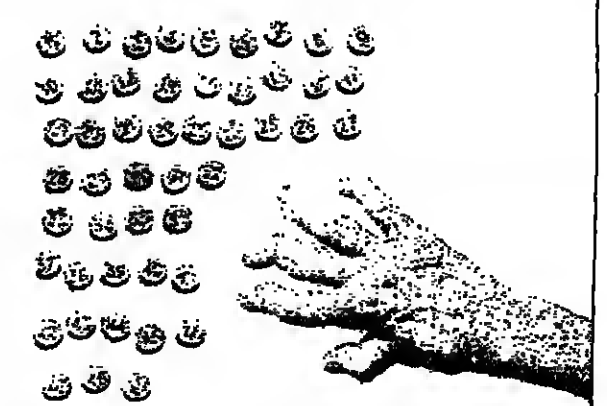
Above all, we will fight to protect the democratic process itself. Increasingly it is left to Liberal Democrats to block this government's attempts to push laws through Parliament without proper scrutiny, just as it is Liberal Democrats who challenge Labour's abuse of power on many of the local councils they control.

We shall be asking a lot from our MPs and candidates in the coming weeks. MPs in particular will need to combine campaigning in the constituencies with intense activity in Parliament. There will be some fierce debate - we are not prepared to play a game of insults, but we will stand our ground on issues which we believe matter to the people of this country. The other parties try to exclude us from debate. Our leader is allowed only one question a week to the Prime Minister, compared to Tony Blair's six, so we need to use other Parliamentary procedures to make our case known: parliamentary guerrilla tactics may be needed. If the Government tries to win votes by trickery, it must expect a reaction from a party which cares about Parliament.

In the coming weeks, the Conservatives and Labour parties will insult each other endlessly, but will get closer and closer together on policy issues. Indeed, Labour's political stance is largely decided by what the Conservatives do. Liberal Democrats are different. We have consistent policies on education, taxation, the economy, Europe, crime, electoral reform and civil liberties. In the dying days of this parliament, we must make that distinctive position clearly known. 1997 is our year of opportunity.

The writer is MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed and Deputy Leader and Chairman of the Liberal Democrats.

LIFE'S A LOTTERY



When you buy a lottery ticket, you've a one in 14 million chance of winning the jackpot. The chances that you may experience some form of rheumatic disease are rather greater.

As many people in Britain today know, arthritis can cause severe crippling joint damage to hands and wrists, feet, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, jaw and neck can also be affected causing unrelenting pain and disability.

The Arthritis and Rheumatism Council is the only major UK charity financing medical research into osteoarthritis and rheumatic diseases at most universities hospitals and medical schools in the UK.

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obituaries / gazette

Lord Harvington

For all that he came from an impeccable Tory background, had impeccable Tory interests – golf, hunting, yachting and farming among them – and was a distinguished wartime fighter pilot, Robert Grant-Ferris was, above all other things, a great House of Commons man, with a solid background in local government.

In 1933 he was elected as a local councillor in Birmingham. In 1935 he entered Parliament as member for St Pancras North. He lost that seat (not least because he had been unable to devote sufficient attention to it during his time in the RAF) in 1945.

He then contested Wandsworth twice, unsuccessfully, before winning Nantwich in 1955; that seat he held until his retirement in 1974. He was Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, and chairman of the Ways and Means Committee during the years of Edward Heath's government, having never before held any office but that of a Parliamentary Private Secretary in wartime.

Although he was staunchly right-wing in most of his opinions (for example, supporting

General Franco enthusiastically during the Spanish Civil War) he won, over the years, the stout regard of the Labour Party. It was a Labour government that honoured him, first with a knighthood in 1969, and then, in 1974, with a peerage; he took the title Baron Harvington.

He was born Robert Grant Ferris in 1907, and went to Douai School in Berkshire. He worked briefly as an estate agent before entering Parliament: he always said that this experience stood him in good stead when he became a farmer. Then, in defiance of family tradition, he joined the RAE.

He served in most of the major theatres of war, including France, Egypt, India and Malaya. Of his Malaya service he had particularly fond memories, and he was above all proud when – amid a string of foreign decorations – he was made a Knight Grand Cross of the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta in 1949.

As befitted his background in local government, Grant-Ferris was deeply involved in hospital work, showing none of the hos-

tility evinced by many Conservatives to the post-war creation of the National Health Service. But it was as a breeder of sheep that he really made his extra-parliamentary reputation. He was no mere jobbing farmer: he gave assiduous attention to the selective breeding of sheep, and his eminence in this field was recognised by his election as president of the National Sheep Breeders' Association in 1956; he also served no less than three terms as president of the Southdown Sheep Society.

Grant-Ferris's support of Franco was, in all probability, a reflection of his devout Roman Catholicism. Though never a religious prig, he carried the belief in honour and uprightness inculcated by his faith into his House of Commons career. If ever – so parliamentary tradition has it – a man's word was his bond, it was the word of Robert Grant-Ferris. It was his unwavering reputation for straight dealing and unrivalled knowledge of parliamentary procedure which won him such a high reputation on all sides of the House.

He was not, however, a very

active peer, for he moved, in 1974, to Jersey, to be with his daughter. But he left behind kind and grateful memories.

Patrick Cosgrave

Robert Grant Ferris (Robert Grant-Ferris), politician; born 30 December 1907; called to the Bar, Inner Temple 1937; MP (Conservative) for North St Pancras 1937-45, for Nantwich 1955-74; Air Efficiency Award 1942; Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Town and Country Planning (W.S. Morrison) 1944-45; President, Southdown Sheep Society of England 1956-57, 1959-60, 1973; President, National Sheep Breeders' Association 1956-58; a Member of the Speaker's Panel of Chairmen, House of Commons 1962-70; chairman, Board of Management, Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth 1963-70; Ki 1969; President, Smahfield Club 1970; Chairman of Ways and Means and Deputy Speaker, House of Commons 1970-74; PC 1971; created 1974 Baron Harvington; married 1930 Florence Brennan de Vine (deceased); one son, one daughter; died Jersey 30 December 1996.



No more jobbing farmer: Robert Grant-Ferris MP presenting a petition at 10 Downing Street on behalf of his Nantwich constituents, 1970

John Burgess

Although his sporting life was dedicated to Rugby Union, first as a player and later as England coach and RFU president, one of the defining moments which shaped the philosophy of John Burgess came during a pre-war visit as a youngster to the Manchester United football ground at Old Trafford.

"I can still recall quite vividly a United reserve, a 20-year-old called Johnny Carey, dealing with a high ball in a tight corner," he recalled, half a century later. "The incident was only a few feet away from me and I can remember now, as if it were yesterday, how he took the ball on his instep and brought it under control in an instant."

"I could not believe that a man could do what he did. I was mesmerised by a moment of pure skill and that image has always stayed with me. One flash like that can make the most depressing game worthwhile for me."

Although he played one

game with Blackburn Rovers during a year of association football for the club after he left school, he quickly decided that he did not share Carey's talent. After service with the Fleet Air Arm in the Second World War, he turned to Rugby Union with Old Salfordians and later joined Broughton Park. From that point, Rugby Union became his consuming interest.

In business life, Burgess was an electrical engineer by training, having studied at Salford Technical College, and he worked extensively in the Soviet Union and world-wide as managing director of the Stockport company Simon Handling, as a result of which he was appointed CBE in 1978 for his services to world exports. In addition to a great affection for the classic Russian fur hat, which was for many years his own fashion statement, Burgess's work was clear-

ly influential in bringing the vital ingredients of precision, planning and attention to detail to his rugby. He was also a man who constantly demanded mental agility from his team, cries of "Thinking, Lancashire, thinking!" providing the backdrop to many of their triumphs.

For some, he was ahead of his time in terms of thinking and planning. For others, notably during his time as England coach during tours to Japan and Australia in 1971 and 1975 and during the 1974-75 domestic season, he was too direct. This was a man with enormous passion for life, who delivered his views straight from the shoulder. Not everyone could handle his style.

His successes in the North, most notably in directing the North West Counties to the first defeat of the New Zealand All Blacks by any regional side, at Workington in 1972, had turned as much on his motivational skills as his strategic planning.

His team talks have passed into the folklore of Lancashire and Northern Rugby and the image of him stripped to his string vest, pounding out his oration with huge animation, and ultimately destroying the dressing-room table, will live long in the hearts of those who shared that momentous Workington experience.

Yet, behind his verbal pyrotechnics, there was also a man of compassion and thoughtfulness who was proper, respectful, well-mannered. He cared deeply for his players, scolding when the need arose, but always quick with a personal welcome to a new face and an individual word of encouragement or praise, a pat on the back or a hug which said "Well done" on the good days or "Hard lines" when things hadn't worked out.

As an administrator, Burgess held the office of RFU President in the 1987-88 season, having joined the Committee as a Lancashire representative in

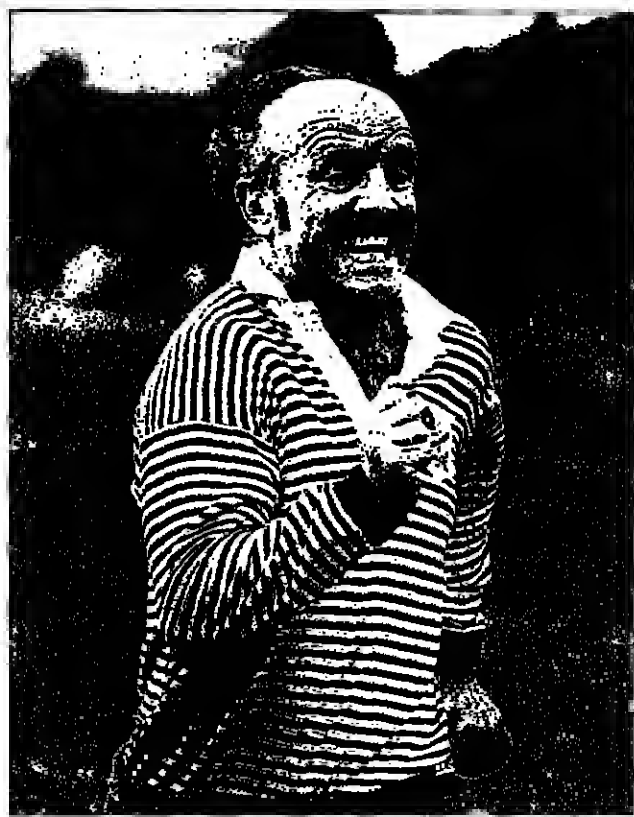
1967. He led the Burgess Commission in 1981 which sought to identify the best way forward for the game at that time – a mission he was still deeply committed to and actively involved in at the time of his death.

But while his work for the game at international level brought him an enormous collection of friendships, his greatest joy was to be working for Lancashire and the North, searching for excellence and constantly hoping to recapture the days when Cotton, Beaumont, Neary, Slemen, Carleton, Smith et al wore the England jersey with pride and distinction.

John Burgess, rugby player, coach and administrator; born Salford 8 November 1924; England Rugby Union coach, Japan tour 1971, Australia tour 1975, England 1974-75; CBE 1978; President, Rugby Football Union 1987-88; twice married (one son, one daughter); died Macclesfield, Cheshire 1 January 1997.

Tony Simpson

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Burgess training at Broughton Park, 1971. Photograph: Mike Brett

A. H. Chaplin

A. H. Chaplin was the penultimate Principal Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, before the library departments of the museum were absorbed into the British Library in 1973.

Arthur Hugh Chaplin was the elder son of the Rev Herbert Chaplin. As a nonconformist minister his father moved frequently and Hugh was educated at a number of different schools including King's Lynn Grammar School and Bedford Modern School before taking his degree at University College London. After brief periods as an assistant librarian at Reading University and Queen's University, Belfast, he entered the British Museum as an Assistant Keeper in the Department of Printed Books in 1930.

All Assistant Keepers in the department were trained in cataloguing as a basic skill, and Chaplin devoted much of his career to various aspects of this work, becoming an acknowledged expert in the field. He also shared the other tasks of the library, including deputising for the Superintendent of the Reading Room and selecting books and periodicals to be acquired – he dealt with Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American material.

Many of his colleagues left the museum during the Second World War to serve in the Armed Forces or in government departments, but Chaplin was one of those who remained in order to keep the library service in operation, largely for the benefit of persons engaged in work

of national importance. After one of the bookstacks was destroyed with the loss of some 250,000 volumes on the night of 10/11 May 1941 (a night when several of the upper-floor galleries of the museum were also burnt out), he helped with the salvage work, which went on for many months.

When the war ended and the recruitment of new staff began Chaplin was engaged in training the new entrants in cataloguing. By the time the first volume of this appeared in 1960, Chaplin had been transferred to other duties.

After a brief period as Superintendent of the Reading Room in 1959 he was promoted to Keeper in the same year and put in charge of reader and information services. His cata-

loguing expertise was however put to good use in 1961 when he organised an International Conference on Cataloguing in Paris. His work in this connection was described as brilliant.

In 1966 he was promoted Principal Keeper of Printed Books. A year later the library was thrown into turmoil when Harold Wilson's government suddenly, and without any consultation with the trustees of the museum, announced that the long-planned building for the expansion of the library would not be built on the designated site to the south of Great Russell Street. A committee was set up under the chairmanship of Fred (later Lord) Dainton to examine the whole future of the national libraries system, and until this reported in March

1969 the Department of Education and Science blocked all developments in Chaplin's department. He had put forward plans for considerable changes soon after he became Principal Keeper and, in his final report before he retired in the summer of 1970, he commented ruefully on how few of them had come to fruition.

He was put under enormous pressure to compile evidence to be presented to the Dainton Committee, and the calm way in which he coped with this was much admired.

In his retirement he and his wife, Irene Marcoussé, remained active in Labour politics, and he kept up his links with the Library Association, of which he had been a member of Council from 1964 to 1970. He be-

came a Fellow of University College London in 1969, and served as a member of the Senate of London University from 1973 to 1979. For 10 years he worked on a history of cataloguing in the Department of Printed Books from the 1830s. This was published in 1987 under the title *GK: 150 years of the General Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum*, and is a concise and clear account of a very complicated subject.

His wife was incapacitated by a stroke for several years before her death in 1980, and during this trying time he cared for her devotedly. In 1995, when a lunch in his honour was given by Michael Smithurst, one of the Directors General of the British Library, to celebrate

his 90th birthday, Chaplin was still as lucid and fluent as ever. Difficulty with walking obliged him to give up his second-floor flat at 44 Russell Square which he had occupied for over 50 years, and move to ground-floor accommodation nearby. His final illness was mercifully brief.

Philip Harris
Arthur Hugh Chaplin, librarian; born 17 April 1905; Assistant Librarian, Reading University 1927-28; Assistant Librarian, Queen's University, Belfast 1928-29; Assistant Keeper, Department of Printed Books, British Museum 1930-53; Deputy Keeper 1953-59; Keeper 1959-66; Principal Keeper 1966-70; CB 1970; married 1937 Irene Marcoussé (died 1990); died London 24 December 1996.

Philip Harris
Arthur Hugh Chaplin, librarian; born 17 April 1905; Assistant Librarian, Reading University 1927-28; Assistant Librarian, Queen's University, Belfast 1928-29; Assistant Keeper, Department of Printed Books, British Museum 1930-53; Deputy Keeper 1953-59; Keeper 1959-66; Principal Keeper 1966-70; CB 1970; married 1937 Irene Marcoussé (died 1990); died London 24 December 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

POTTER: On 20 December, in Eghwytch, to Ruth and Philip, the gift of a daughter, Bridget Caitlin.

WILLIAMS/THOMAS: On 29 December 1996, to Sally and Henry, a daughter, Clementine Violet Zora, a sister for Lily and Fernus.

DEATHS

JENKIN: Michael Glenville, 27 December 1996, management consultant, formerly Marketing and Sales Director of Unilever plc, died suddenly at home in Hereford. Cherished lover and soulmate of Judith, his wife. Beloved father and stepfather of Julia, Georgia, Richard, Carolina, David, Simon, Catherine and Emma. Memorial service at Little Birch Parish Church, Hereford, Tuesday 7 January at 11.15am. All enquiries to the family: 01432 273649. No flowers please; donations to the RNIB.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

SPROXTON: C. Vernon. A memorial service will be held at 2pm, Saturday 5 February 1997, at the United Reformed Church, Regent Square, London WC1. All welcome.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS may be telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, is to marry the Hon. Sophie Rhys-Jones, daughter of the late Lord and Lady Mountbatten of Burma, on 19 June 1999 at St George's Hall, Windsor.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; and the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. **TOMORROW:** The Household Cavalry mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; and the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Miss Grace Bumbry, opera singer, 60; Miss Dyan Caocoon, actress, 58; Mr Alexander Chancellor, journalist, 57; Capt Sir Ivor Colquhoun of Luss Bt, Chief of the Clan, 81; Miss Rosalee Crutchley, actress, 56; Mr Ian Clark Hutchison, a member of the Queen's Body Guard for Scotland, 94; Professor Brian Josephson, physicist, 57; Air Vice Marshal Richard Kyle, 56; Professor Lance Layton, Principal, Royal Veterinary College, 53; Mr John McLaughlin, blues and jazz guitarist, 54; Miss Margaret Marshall, opera singer, 48; Mr Mick Mills, footballer, 48; Mr Floyd Patterson, boxer, 52; Mr Nicholas Payne, Director of the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 52; Mr Timothy Rix, publisher, 63; Miss Barbara Rush, actress, 67; Sir Alan Thomas, chairman, G.M. Firth (Holdings) plc, 54; Mrs Audrey Wise, MBE, 62; Miss Jane Wyman, actress, 83.

TOMORROW: King Juan Carlos of Spain, 59; Jean, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, 76; Mr Mansur Ali Khan, Nawab of Patna, former Indian cricketer, 56; M. Jean-Pierre Aumont, actor, 86; Mr Alfred Brendel, concert pianist, 66; Mrs Jean Clark, President, National Council of Women of Great Britain, 62; Mr John Darby, former chairman, Ultramar, 67; Mr Terry Davis MP, 59; Mr Robert Davall, actor, 66; Sir Frank Hartley, former Vice-Chancellor, London University, 86; Sir Alan Hume, former chairman, Ancient Monuments Board, Scotland, 84; Miss Diane Keaton, actress, 51; Lord Kingsdown, Lord-Lieutenant of Kent, 70; Miss Jan Leeming, broadcaster, 55; Miss Sarah Lucas, radio presenter, 46; Mr Maurizio Pollini, pianist, 55; Maj-Gen Henry Quintan, former Director of the Army Dental Service, 91; Lt-Gen Sir Michael Rose, UN commander in Bosnia, 57;

General Sir John Stibbon, Chief Royal Engineer, 62.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh and chronologist, 1581; Sir William Hillary, founder of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, 1771; Jakob Ludwig Carl Grimm, philologist and folklorist, 1785; Louis Braille, designer of a blind alphabet, 1809; Sir Isaac Pitman, publisher and inventor of Pitman's shorthand, 1813; General Tom Thumb (Charles Sherwood Stratton), dwarf, 1838; Augustus Edwin John, painter, 1878; Sterling Holloway, actor and comedian, 1905; Deaths: Maréchal François-Henri de Moulmorency-Bouteville, Duc de Luxembourg, soldier, 1695; Charles Samuel Keene, artist and illustrator, 1891; Clarence Edward Dutton, geologist, 1912; Ralph Vaughan Williams, composer, 1958; Albert Camus, novelist and playwright, killed 1960; Erwin Schrödinger, physicist, 1961; Thomas Stearns Eliot, poet and critic, 1965; Donald Malcolm Campbell, land and water speedster, killed 1967; Joy-Friederike Victoria Adamson, naturalist and writer, 1980; Christopher William Bradshaw Isherwood, novelist and playwright, 1986. On this day: Columbus sailed from America back to Spain in the *Niña*, 1493; the Fabian Society was founded, 1884; the first appendectomy operation was performed, 1885; in India, the National Congress was declared illegal, and Mahatma Gandhi was arrested, 1932; the first pop music chart was published in the United States by the *Billboard* magazine, 1936; a strike of barbers' assistants in Copenhagen ended after 33 years, 1961. Today is the Feast Day of St Elizabeth Bayley Seton, St Gregory of Langres, St Pharlatidis, St Rigobert of Rheims and St Roger of Eliland.

TOMORROW: Births: John Burke, genealogist, 1787; King Camp Gillette, inventor of the safety razor, 1855; Stella Dorothea Gibbons, poet

and novelist, 1902. Deaths: St Edward the Confessor, 1066; Catherine de Medici, Queen of France, 1589; Joseph Gillon, steel pen manufacturer, 1873; Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton, explorer, 1922; John Calvin Coolidge, 30th US President, 1933; Amy Johnson (Mollison), aviator, 1941; Brian Alexander Johnston, broadcaster and cricket commentator, 1994. On this day: Charles the Bold of France was killed by the Swiss at the Battle of Nancy, 1477; Britain and Turkey concluded the Treaty of the Dardanelles, 1809; the first demonstration of X-rays was given by Wilhelm von Röntgen, 1896; the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia (Yugoslavia) was established, 1918; FM radio was first demonstrated in the United States by Major Edwin H. Armstrong, 1940; President Giscard d'Estaing promulgated a law making the use of French compulsory in advertising, in 1976. Today is Wassail Eve (tonight is Twelfth Night) and the Feast Day of St Apollinaris, St Convoyon, St Dorotheus the Younger, St Gerlac, St John Nepomucene Neumann, St Simeon Stylites and St Synedicta.

Lectures

TODAY
National Gallery: Rachel Barnes, 'Crimes and Misdemeanours (I): Giorgio Vasari, *Portrait of Prince and his Followers into Rome*', 12pm.
Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradley, 'Tolstoy's Ideal Artist', 1pm.
British Museum: Hilary Williams, 'Michelangelo's *Cartoon Epiphany*', 1.15pm.
National Portrait Gallery: Andrew Robinson, 'General Officers of WWI', 3pm.

TOMORROW
Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradley, '20th-century Artistic Ideals', 2.30pm.
National Portrait Gallery: Simone Matthews, 'Portraits by John Singer Sargent', 3pm.

The Prince of Wales and the cosmos

faith & reason

What does the would-be 'Defender of Faith' intend for the Church of England? He should concentrate on bridge-building, says Paul Handley, Editor of the *Church Times*.

The Prince of Wales is known to be unhappy with one of the titles he will inherit with the crown. He told Jonathan Dimbleby in 1993 or 1994 that he would prefer to ditch the title "Defender of Faith", in favour of "Defender of Faith". With the Prince's latest decision to become a born-again Anglican, reported in last Saturday's *Daily Telegraph* and expressed in language shared by that newspaper's more extreme contributors, I wonder if a more appropriate title might not be "Pontifex Maximus".

In ancient Rome, the pontifices were public figures elected to preside over the state religion, the *pontifex maximus* being the chief of these. It was a political appointment, the holder being, as the title suggests, a bridge-builder between the secular and sacred aspects of public life. The idea might appeal to the Prince, whose chief religious concern, as far as we can make it out, is closing the gap between scientific materialism and the spiritual world.

The pontifices were kept in business by the huge number of Roman gods, many of whom were easily offended and could take their revenge by sabotaging public enterprises. In a modern parallel, for "gods" read "the natural world", which, in the Prince's mind, is linked with the spiritual rather than the material world. According to the Prince, nobody is pointing out the constant damage being done to the natural world as a result of short-sighted public policy and corporate greed.

If this is indeed the top item on the Prince's agenda, it is small wonder that he has looked for support beyond the Church of England. Christian religious texts are overwhelmingly concerned with humanity, and in the West, where the natural world is generally predictable (despite the current surprise that snow can possibly fall

in January), human behaviour has remained the chief matter of the religious. "I am one of those people who search for the Prince told Dimbleby, and, with Laurens van der Post as his guide, he has spent much of his adult life searching overseas. The prophet's own country was without honour. The Prince's public life was heavily structured: having a structured religious life as well did nothing for him. Reacting against the formal, he sought the formless.

But having taken things apart, and having watched his private life fall apart at the same time, there is some evidence that the Prince is looking for a way to put things back together again. An important piece of evidence is the speech he gave to a meeting of religious and business leaders just before Christmas:

I have always felt that tradition is not a man-made element in our lives, but a God-given intuition of natural rhythms, of the fundamental harmony that emerges from the union of the paradoxical opposites that exist in every aspect of nature. Tradition reflects the timeless order of the cosmos, and anchors us into an awareness of the great mysteries of the universe.

Much of this is complete gibberish; mystical language usually is. But the attempt

to wed the cosmological stuff with traditional religious expression might, eventually, get the Prince a more sympathetic hearing than he has received hitherto. Certainly it might help him recruit a few more people who share his vision.

But not if he carries on being so rude. He was reported last weekend as saying that the Church he loved had been "swept away by pathetic, politically correct progressives". He has clearly spent a term at the Prince Philip school of charm, pushed into enrolling, perhaps, by Lord Runcie's recent suggestion that he should "love the Church of England a bit more". Few in the Church would use the word "progressive" to describe the current leadership – unless one were referring to a liberalising tendency towards divorce and remarriage, with which the Prince might be thought to agree.

The phrase only makes sense if it is applied to the modern liturgy, in the process of being revised yet again. It, before this latest resolve, the Prince was looking in the C of E just as a receptacle for the beauty of ancient liturgy, his exasperation can be understood. But, outside the Prayer Book services at Windsor and Sandringham, the Church has been changing. Many modern liturgies are attempting exactly the kind of thing the Prince wants: combining traditional elements with what is, at best, a worshipping appreciation of God's creation. The Gordonstoun schoolboy might not enjoy the accompanying ambient music and video displays, but the sort of people he reaches out to through his Prince's Trust do: young people who are marrying secular culture with religious expression.

If the Prince is serious about bridge-building, he will find some firm support on the Anglican bank. But it might not be where he thinks it is: not on the high ground, but near the water.

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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Foreign bidders picked for BBC Transmission

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

The £230m transmission business of the BBC last night looked set to pass into foreign hands, with the announcement that a US-French consortium, which includes a subsidiary of state-owned France Telecom, had been selected as the Corporation's preferred bidder.

The sale to foreign companies of a key part of the country's broadcasting infrastructure could generate additional criticism of the Government's privatisation policy. A wave of takeovers in the electricity industry has already seen foreign ownership of the sector soar.

The BBC has hotly denied that the sale is the first step toward the eventual privatisation of whole parts of the BBC, though it has confirmed it intends to spin off BBC Resources, which currently operates the transmission services and as well as other broadcast facilities, into a separate commercial subsidiary as early as this spring.

The managing partner in the preferred consortium is Castle Tower Corporation (CTC), based in Houston, while two investment firms, one of them American, are believed to own about 15 per cent. They are believed to have bid about £220m for the BBC's domestic radio and television transmission operations.

An additional £10m is likely to be raised through the sale of the domestic transmission operations of the BBC World Service, for which a management group, backed by the investment company J1, was yesterday named the preferred bidder. The proceeds of the World Service sale will go to the Treasury, while the BBC will keep the net proceeds from the domestic disposal.

The surprise decision left NTL, Britain's leading transmission company, out of the running. Also overlooked were a management group backed by



Bob Phillips: 'Excellent news for licence payers'

Mercury Asset Management and a consortium led by Securicor. NTL, owned by US-controlled cable company International CableTel, was privatised in 1991, and provides broadcasting services to ITV and Channel 4.

NTL said yesterday: "We are obviously disappointed," adding: "We are willing and able to meet the needs of the BBC in the event that they do not consummate an agreement with their preferred bidder."

The final four were drawn from 17 serious bids, out of 100 companies that had requested sales memorandums last year.

CTC owns a stake believed to

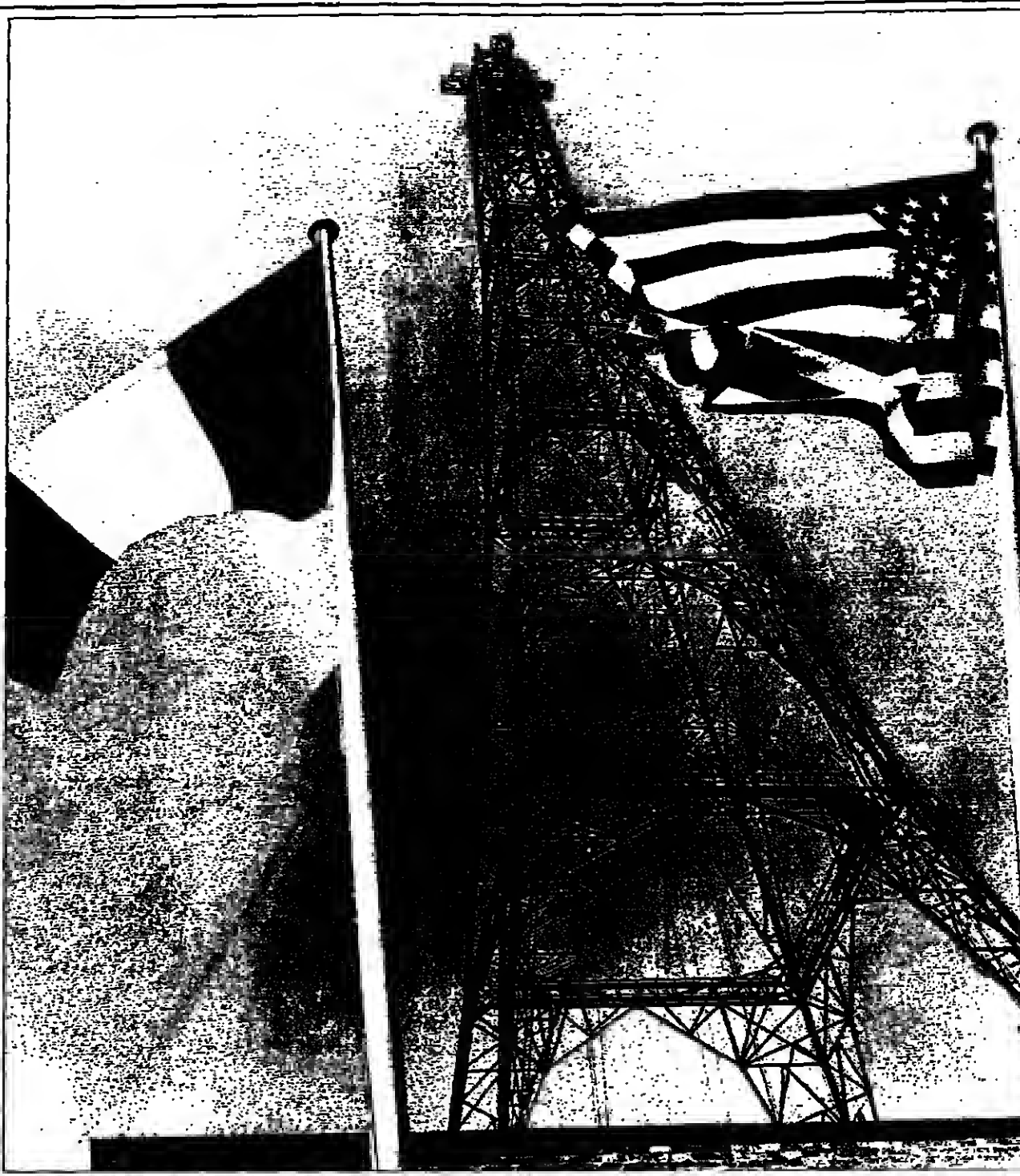
be at least 51 per cent in the preferred consortium, while two financial firms, Candover Investments and Berkshire Partners, a leading US private equity investment fund are thought to have about 15 per cent between them. Telediffusion de France, a subsidiary of France Telecom, has the rest. The preferred bidder is believed to have made the highest financial offer.

CTC, based in Houston, Texas, operates about 1,200 broadcast and wireless transmission sites in the US and the Caribbean. TDF already collaborates with the BBC on the development of digital technology.

The announcement was hailed by Bob Phillips, head of the BBC's commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, as "excellent news for the licence fee payer." He added: "We have been concerned in this process not simply about the size of the bid in the brown envelope but about quality, reliability and costs." Under the privatisation, first announced in November 1995, the BBC will be assured a 10 year contract for transmission services from the new owners, under which any cost savings achieved will be passed on to the broadcaster.

"There will be no added burden to the licence payer," Mr Phillips said. "Quite the reverse." Currently, the BBC spends about £50m annually on transmission services, according to internal market estimates.

The sale was part of a four-pronged strategy to prepare the BBC for the digital age. As a first step, the corporation intends to achieve additional sav-



Will BBC's sell-off send the Stars and Stripes and Tricolour flying at Crystal Palace?

ings of about 15 per cent over three years, and to increase its commercial revenues from the development of subscription TV channels and other services. The BBC had also hoped

to convince the Government to agree a modest increase in the licence fee over five years. However, last month, the fee was set to be broadly neutral, with a second year increase

offset by subsequent decreases over the period. "The sale [of the transmission assets] is good news, and comes at a time when there is to be no real increase in the licence

fee," Mr Phillips said. "It will help ensure we can continue to produce quality programming in the digital age," he added. The privatisation has been fought by BBC unions.

Airbus partners strike a deal

Michael Harrison

The four partners in Airbus Industrie last night reached agreement on plans to turn the aircraft manufacturer into a fully commercial limited company.

However, details of how the new company will be structured and what assets the partners will put into it will not emerge until a binding memorandum of understanding has been signed "over the next few days".

The delay in making a full announcement prompted speculation that the partners still had to iron out agreement on the timetable for progress towards Airbus becoming a full commercial entity.

Nevertheless, the fact that Airbus was able to make any statement at all following the meeting in Paris was taken as a step forward.

There has been a sharp disagreement between the partners as to what the new company should consist of. British Aerospace and Germany's Daimler-Benz have been pressing for Airbus to take control of each partner's manufacturing operations. Aerospatiale of France was said to be resisting such far-reaching changes, preferring Airbus to remain a design and marketing consortium.

At present the four partners - the other members of the consortium are CASA of Spain - divide the work according to their respective shareholdings, charge Airbus for their contribution and account for profit or loss separately.

The fact that agreement has been reached on an MOU suggests that the Anglo-German axis has won the day. The delay in providing details of the new accord suggests that the partners have still to hammer out the time scale over which they hand their assets over to the new commercial entity.

"This is a very careful game of chess being played a piece at a time," said one observer. A BAe spokesman added that it was very satisfied with the outcome of yesterday's meeting.

The plan remains to have the new business up and running in 1999 with the ultimate intention of floating the business on the world's capital markets.

A report late last year from the US investment bank Lehman Brothers suggested that Airbus could be worth as much as \$18bn when it is floated and that profits before development costs and launch repayments could reach \$2bn over the next seven years.

However, much will depend on whether Airbus proceeds with the \$12bn launch of the A3XX - a new 600-plus seater super-jumbo jet to take on Boeing in the large jet market.

BAe has a 20 per cent stake in Airbus, Daimler and Aerospatiale each hold 38 per cent while CASA has a 4 per cent stake.

Record rise in consumer borrowing renews pressure for higher rates

Magnus Grimond

The prospect of a quarter-point rise in interest later this month drew closer yesterday after it was revealed that lending to consumers soared to record levels in November. Hopes of a further rise in money rates allowed the pound to recoup nearly all the previous day's losses against the German mark and strengthen against the dollar.

The upsurge in consumer confidence has for the first time taken the total outstanding on credit cards, overdrafts and other unsecured lending to individuals beyond the levels of the boom years of the 1980s. Following last month's news of a record fall in unemployment for November, analysts said

the leading figures from the Bank of England would add to the pressure on Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, to raise rates after his meeting with Bank of England Governor Eddie George on 15 January.

Adam Cole, economist with brokers HSBC James Capel, said the latest news had to be a cause of some concern. "The fact is that consumers are experiencing quite strong income and supplementing that with quite strong borrowing as well... If that continues you could see consumer spending picking up momentum in the year ahead." He forecasts growth of 4.5 per cent in the current year, up from 3 per cent in 1996.

The only question, he said, was whether rates needed to go

up ahead of crucial figures on retail sales in December and gross domestic product for the fourth quarter due in a few weeks. "I think the answer is, on balance, that they should."

But the Government bailed the leading data as further evidence of the strength of the economy. Michael Jack, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said: "This is a welcome set of figures which confirm the growing confidence of individuals in the strength of the economy. At a personal level borrowing remains sensible and [people are] well within their ability to service the credit they want."

Net consumer credit rose by a seasonally adjusted £1.1bn pounds in November, up from

£875m in October and close to double the £600m increase reported in November 1995. The increase over the year has accelerated to 16.6 per cent.

Adding in a £1.72bn rise in mortgages, the total lent to individuals soared by £2.83bn, the biggest rise for six years.

The evidence of a consumer boom was reinforced by figures from the John Lewis Partnership showing its department store recording sales 8.8 per cent ahead in the week to 23 December compared with the same week the previous year.

about the possibility of an uncontrolled house-buying boom". Separately, Oxford Economic Forecasting, an independent group, said higher interest rates, which it forecast will hit 7 per cent by the summer, would be required to dampen growth in spending.

The pound added nearly three pence to DM2.6353 and rose slightly against the dollar to \$1.6922.

Other figures yesterday showed the UK's official reserves suffered an underlying outflow of \$109m in December. The Bank of England also confirmed earlier figures showing that M4, the broad measure of money supply which includes lending and deposits, grew 10.8 per cent to November.

Woolwich to pay out £800 in shares

Jill Tressor
Banking Correspondent

More than 2.5 million members of Woolwich Building Society will find out next week that they will receive shares worth at least £800 when the society makes its stock market debut later this year.

The precise details of the share distribution and estimated share price range will be revealed on Monday. This is when the society intends to start mailing its 100 page transfer document through first class post in an exercise which is expected to take 11 days.

Separately, the wait of the 9 million members of Halifax should also end soon. Halifax expects to reach a decision at start of the week on the mailing date of the transfer document for its £11bn stock market

flotation which has been planned since 1994.

Woolwich's transfer document is expected to confirm that its flotation, which is estimated at between £3bn to £3.5bn, will take the form of a two-pronged share distribution to members.

First, each of the society's 2.5 million or so eligible members will get a flat distribution of shares, which are expected to be worth around £800. In addition, two-year savers with a minimum balance of £1,000 on 31 December 1995 and 11 February 1997 will receive an additional distribution of shares which could double the value of their share distribution.

The society is also writing to around 1 million of its members who it believes are not entitled to receive any shares or take part in the planned vote on 11 February in the Docklands.

BA to sell off stake in engineering operations

Michael Harrison

British Airways is to press ahead with plans to sell off a stake in its engineering operations following the arrival this Monday of a new managing director to head up the business.

Colin Matthews, a former senior executive with the US giant General Electric, takes over at British Airways Engineering with a remit to bring in fresh outside investment.

The move forms part of BA's radical strategy to cut £1bn from its operating costs over the next three years and shed 5,000 jobs.

At the same time, however, BA plans to take on a similar number of staff in customer support jobs and yesterday announced that it will be hiring 1,000 customer service staff over the coming year.

Bob Ayling, BA's chief executive, said that the intention was to convert BA Engineering into a separate limited company in due course. The injection of outside capital is expected to happen at the same time.

BA Engineering employs 9,000 staff - about one sixth of the airline's workforce - and accounts for around £300m of BA's

£8bn turnover. It was converted into a separate profit centre in 1995 with the aim of increasing its independence from the main airline operations.

Mr Matthews, an engineer and management consultant, who formerly ran GE's Canadian hydro-turbine business, will also be expected to develop BA Engineering's sub-contractor work. It already carries out work for 100 other airlines.

As part of its strategy of becoming a "virtual airline" BA has already announced the closure of its ground handling division at Heathrow with the loss

of 750 jobs and the sale of its ground fleet services division which employs 470 people at Heathrow and Gatwick. The airline is also outsourcing part of its accounting operations from west London to Bombay where wages are less than a fifth of their UK level. A total of 600 jobs are going from the 1,100 employed in BA's passenger revenue accounting operations over the next three years.

The airline, which is waiting for final government approval to proceed with a transatlantic alliance with American Airlines, has stressed that wherever

possible job losses will be achieved through early retirement, voluntary redundancy and redeployment elsewhere within the company.

BA has also pledged that it will take on broadly the same number of staff as it is cutting under the cost reduction plan. To this end it yesterday announced a recruitment drive to hire an extra 1,000 customer service staff over the next 12 months. Most of the new staff will be employed as cabin crew based at either Heathrow or Gatwick and will be expected to have a second language.



Bob Ayling: Seeking outside investment

Shock trust tax imposed by Finance Bill

John Willcock

Millions of individuals and companies that use trusts could be hit by an unexpected clause in the Finance Bill published yesterday which makes dividends from shares held by trusts vulnerable to income tax.

The Bill principally affects discretionary trusts, which are set up to allocate assets or income to specific beneficiaries. These trusts are used by individuals to distribute assets to their families, for instance, and by companies with share schemes.

Richard Law, corporate tax partner at Ernst & Young, said the Inland Revenue's original statements published with the October Budget had indicated trusts would be far safer from income tax.

Mr Richards said: "A change to the income tax treatment of trusts, arising from the change to the share purchase rules, has been hidden away in a schedule in defiance of public statements to the contrary. This is retrospective taxation and it is unacceptable."

Under Schedule 7, paragraph 3, of the Bill, the Government

has introduced a tax charge on "qualifying distributions made to trustees after 8 October 1996" (as part of the change to the taxation of buy-backs and company purchases of their own shares).

The Bill includes the statement that "this paragraph shall be deemed to have had effect for the year 1996/97".

Mr Richards said that the Inland Revenue gave no hint of this. In fact the Revenue stated: "The income tax liability of taxpayers who receive such distributions will be unaffected by the change." Yet the Finance Bill would impose an extra 14 per cent income tax charge on these trusts, said Mr Richards.

More generally, Mr Richards noted: "Some of the drafting - for instance the finance lessor clauses - is pretty horrendous. Whatever happened to simplification?"

This point was echoed by Rosalind Rowe, director of Coopers & Lybrand's Property Finance Group. "I'm disappointed that it's an extremely complex Bill for what it is trying to achieve. The changes to capital allowances on fixtures is really over the top."

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100			Dow Jones			Nikkei			
Index	Close	Day's change	Index	Close	Day's change	Index	Close	Day's change	Index
FTSE 100	4057.40	-51.10	-1.5	4118.50	3632.30	3.92			
FTSE 250	4469.40	-21.00	-0.5	4588.60	4015.30	3.51			
FTSE 350	2017.90	-26.90	-1.3	2043.60	1816.60	3.83			
FT Small Cap	2178.29	-4.82	-0.2	2244.36	1954.06	3.10			
FT All Share	1989.76	-33.88	-1.7	2013.66	1731.95	3.77			
New York	6442.49	-5.78	-0.1	6560.91	5032.94	2.02			
Tokyo				22666.80	19161.71	0.81			
Hong Kong	13203.44	-248.01	-1.8	13530.95	10204.87	3.09			
Frankfurt	2848.77	-39.08	-1.4	2908.91	2253.36	1.59			

Source: FT Information. All data as at 2 January

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling			UK medium gilt			US long bond			
Rate	Yield	Term	Rate	Yield	Term	Rate	Yield	Term	Rate
3m	6.04	7.78	3m	7.78	7.78	3m	7.78	7.78	7.78
6m	6.04	7.78	6m	7.78	7.78	6m	7.78	7.78	7.78
1y	6.04	7.78	1y	7.78	7.78	1y	7.78	7.78	7.78
2y	6.04	7.78	2y	7.78	7.78	2y	7.78	7.78	7.78
3y	6.04	7.78	3y	7.78	7.78	3y	7.78	7.78	7.78
4y	6.04	7.78	4y	7.78	7.78	4y	7.78	7.78	7.78
5y	6.04	7.78	5y	7.78	7.78	5y	7.78	7.78	7.78
10y	6.04	7.78	10y	7.78	7.78	10y	7.78	7.78	7.78
20y	6.04	7.78	20y	7.78	7.78	20y	7.78	7.78	7.78
30y	6.04	7.78	30y	7.78	7.78	30y	7.78	7.78	7.78

CURRENCIES									
\$/£			£/DM			¥/£			
Rate	Yield	Term	Rate	Yield	Term	Rate	Yield	Term	Rate
3m	6.04	7.78	3m	7.78	7.78	3m	7.78	7.78	7.78
6m	6.04	7.78	6m	7.78	7.78	6m	7.78	7.78	7.78
1y	6.04	7.78	1y	7.78	7.78	1y	7.78	7.78	7.78
2y	6.04	7.78	2y	7.78	7.78	2y	7.78	7.78	7.78
3y	6.04	7.78	3y	7.78	7.78	3y	7.78	7.78	7.78
4y	6.04	7.78	4y	7.78	7.78	4y	7.78	7.78	7.78
5y	6.04	7.78	5y	7.78	7.78	5y	7.78	7.78	7.78
10y	6.04	7.78	10y	7.78	7.78	10y	7.78	7.78	7.78
20y	6.04	7.78	20y	7.78	7.78	20y	7.78	7.78	7.78
30y	6.04	7.78	30y	7.78	7.78	30y	7.78	7.78	7.78

ty mounts, the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, (from left) the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am.

tal Service, 91; Lt-Gen Sir Michael Rose, UN commander in Bosnia, 57.

Gillette, inventor of the safety razor; 1855; Stella Dorotea Gibbons, poet

Mathews, "Portraits by John Singer Sargent", 3pm.

سكيا من الالام



JEREMY WARNER

'BT was once memorably described, probably accurately, as the most hated institution in the land. The lesson was you simply cannot have a privatised utility continuing to behave in the same cavalier fashion towards its customers'

Why privatisation has been a success story

It is an irony about privatisation, a process pioneered in the UK, but as the rest of the world takes up the fashion for selling off state assets with abandon, Britain has seriously cooled to whether it was ever such a good idea in the first place. Since privatisation is arguably our biggest single contribution to the evolution of post-war commerce, this needs some explaining.

Privatisation was never a popular policy; many saw it as little more than Margaret Thatcher's gift to the English middle-classes. Easing one was bitterly fought by the Government's political opponents, and for everyone who made a bono or two out of all those juicy stock market giveaways, hundreds more didn't and resented the easy gains made by those who did.

There was a time, however, when privatisation was generally accepted as "a good thing", theoretically at least. Most of us bought the argument that business is on the whole, with adequate regulation, much better left to the private sector.

That is plainly no longer the case. The tendency these days is to highlight the failings of privatisation rather than its achievements. This is more than just a politically led swing of the pendulum. Knocking privatisation is not a pastime confined to Labour-leaning commentators. The Tory press has been as vicious in lambasting "fat cat" salaries and "excessive" shareholder returns as anyone on the left. It was *The Times* which first urged the case for a windfall profits tax, and *The Daily Telegraph* which has been most consistent in its attacks on excess among the utilities.

Labour has naturally capitalised on all this, turning public suspicion and hatred of the utilities into an electoral issue. Though it has no intention of renationalising these industries, it does intend to crack down on them hard – so hard, in fact, that many of the real gains in efficiency, standards of service and innovation which privatisation has brought about in the UK economy may be undermined.

So what has gone wrong here? Why has such an obviously attractive and rewarding policy resulted in such an overpowering popular backlash? The problem is that along with the cure, privatisation can have some very unappealing side-effects, particularly in its early years. These have been most apparent in the last three of the Government's big privatisations – water, electricity and rail – but they were also there in the early years of British Telecom, now seen as a triumph of privatisation.

Think back to 1987. Here was this vast, unwieldy public utility, making profits of £100 a second or whatever it was, and yet half its telephone boxes didn't work, quality of service was lousy, it was generally perceived to be expensive, there was no realistic alternative and you still had to join a waiting list to get a new telephone line.

BT was once memorably described, probably accurately, as the most hated institution in the land. Here was a privatised utility that behaved in the same cavalier fashion towards its customers as if it were still in the public sector. Abuse of monopoly might be tolerated when the utility forms part of the state, but not when in the

private sector. BT was forced to reform itself, and fast.

None of these strictures are recognisable in today's British Telecom. Even the Labour Party has embraced it as a model for the rest of corporate Britain. Today we have better quality of service, more choice and lower prices in Britain than almost anywhere else in the world apart from the United States. BT is also at the forefront of international developments in telecoms. Liberalisation and privatisation are the two key causes of this extraordinary turnaround. The lesson seems to be, therefore, that provided privatisation is also accompanied by liberalisation, initial teething difficulties are eventually overcome to produce publicly recognised advances.

With water, electricity and rail, it is proving much more difficult to introduce competition into the market, virtually impossible in the case of water. As a result we have had to rely solely on regulation to protect the public interest. This regulation has frequently been seen as wanting. Perhaps more seriously, these industries have embraced wholeheartedly all the worst manifestations of corporate excess.

The general perception, mostly accurate, is that of excessive profits, excessive executive pay and options, excessive returns to shareholders, under-investment and a raw deal for customers. Ergo, regulation and privatisation haven't worked.

There is a flip side to the coin, however. Would the situation have been any better had these industries not been privatised?

The answer is almost certainly no. There would, it is true, be no excessive profits or pay packets, or fabulous returns for shareholders. But, equally, nothing would have changed. These companies would have remained bloated and inefficient enterprises, and despite their public ownership, largely unaccountable for their failings.

Yorkshire Water's inability two summers ago to provide its customers with water was certainly as bad a case as they come of management and regulatory failure, but it would be wrong to think of it as a failure of privatisation as such. Indeed, the fact that Yorkshire Water is privatised, that the service offered is now not just a public service but also a consumable commodity, gives customers channels of redress and accountability they would never have had amid the fudge and obfuscation of the public sector.

What then to do about the problem of excess? Labour's proposed solution is to fiddle around with price cap regulation, the cornerstone of economic regulation of the utilities. The difficulty with this approach is that it is actually price cap regulation which provides one of the key underlying economic justifications for privatisation – incentive to improved efficiency. In other words, Labour may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater if it attempts to address the problem of excess by abandoning the concept of price cap regulation.

The reason for this is that the system is set up, almost deliberately, to allow excess. Prices are capped at a pre-specified level for a period of time, generally five years. If the utility exceeds the regulator's assumptions

about the scope for cost-cutting, then the gains go to shareholders. This is where the "excess" comes from. However, if the system works as it should, these gains are later realised on behalf of the customer at the time of the periodic price review, when there should be a big step down in prices. The excess thus ultimately ends up with the customer.

The fact that regulators have perhaps not been as harsh as they should have been at the time of these periodic reviews demonstrates a failure in regulation, but it doesn't mean that the whole system of price cap regulation is wrong. Certainly there is a powerful case for reform of the institutions of regulation – more accountability, greater transparency and the like.

But what Labour wants to do goes a lot further. It wants to put price reviews on an annual basis, and moreover, to introduce a method of sharing any excess generated between customers and shareholders. It can readily be seen that the effect of this when combined with the windfall profits tax will be to remove virtually all incentive to improved efficiency.

Indeed it might actually work the other way, with utilities failing to meet assumed rates of return and customers having to share in the consequent losses. There would be no incentive to improvement.

By attempting to remove some of the more unpalatable effects of privatisation, then, Labour will also be destroying the radical, reforming aspects of the process, to the ultimate detriment not just of shareholders, but of customers. Isn't that what we really want?

Tinta sticks to guns despite retreat by cable giant TCI

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

TCI International (Tinta), the overseas arm of US cable giant TCI, yesterday vowed to continue its dual strategy of investing in both content and distribution, despite signs the parent company was retreating to its core cable business.

Tinta, which controls pay-television company Flextech and 26 per cent of Telewest, the UK cable operator, "will continue to follow its two lines of businesses in major markets", a spokesperson said.

The commitment came as John Malone, chief executive of TCI, told a US newspaper his multi-track strategy of investing in the Internet, telephones and cable had been too ambitious, over-hyped and impossible to carry out on schedule.

"We were just chasing too many rabbits at the same time," Mr Malone told the *Wall Street Journal*. Mr Malone, who has seen TCI's share price plummet in recent months following poor results and rising debt, said he would focus his attentions on

the cable business, where nearly all TCI's past success has come. The moves marks a postponement of his plans to spend more time with his family.

The growth of direct-to-home satellite services in the US has posed a serious challenge to the cable industry in the past year, and Mr Malone said he would work to accelerate the introduction of digital cable services to meet the competitive threat.

But Tinta, 83 per cent-owned by TCI, said its strategy remained unchanged, despite Mr Malone's comments. "We are run separately, and we have the management in place to achieve our goals," the spokesperson said.

It was also confirmed last night that TCI was proceeding with plans to spin off two subsidiaries – Tinta and Liberty Media – to shareholders, as a further sign of refocusing strategy. Liberty Media groups TCI's programming businesses, including part of its joint-venture investment in Fox Sports, in league with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Tinta welcomed the news of TCI's spin-off plans last night, saying that it made sense to view the international operations of TCI as a separate entity.

Assuming there are no adverse tax implications, TCI will move this year to spin Tinta off to TCI shareholders, which into its shareholders which include several leading US and UK financial institutions. Mr Malone controls about 13 per cent of TCI.



John Malone: Impossible to meet our schedule

In the UK, Tinta owns 51 per cent of Flextech, the pay-TV packager, which recently announced it was negotiating to sign a joint venture with the BBC to launch new pay-TV channels. As well, Flextech owns stakes in UK Gold, UK Living, Bravo and other pay-TV channels. Overseas, Tinta is also active in Argentina, Chile and Japan.

Tinta's main distribution investment in the UK is the large stake in Telewest, which was recently pushed into second position in the UK cable market by Cable & Wireless Communications, the newly formed UK leader.

Telewest is taking the lead to introduce a digital service by the end of the year, featuring hundreds of channels of programming and pay-per-view films. Telewest is also understood to be in negotiations with at least two cable operators, Comcast and General Cable, about taking them over, in a further indication that Tinta's content and distribution strategy remains unaffected by Mr Malone's retrenchment in the US.

£48m Azlan rights issue flops

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

A £48.5m rights issue to fund a Dutch acquisition by computer distribution company Azlan has flopped, leaving the company on the face of SBC Warburg which arranged and underwrote the deal. Most of the 8.2 million shares issued in the cash call were left with the institutions that sub-underwrote the issue after Azlan's share price plunged below the 620p at which the rights was pitched. Azlan's shares had been trading at 740p only days before the

company said it planned to raise the money at the end of November. They fell to 577p, however, as the City voted with its feet on a deal which it worried would dilute Azlan's high margins and knock its market rating. Yesterday the shares closed unchanged at 567.5p.

The rights issue money was planned to fund the acquisition of Dutch computing company Akam and to finance general working capital needs. But it came at an awkward time for Warburg, whose electronics analyst Mark Loveland had followed Azlan since its flotation

but moved in early November to join Kleinwort Benson.

Azlan, headed by Chris Martin, has grown quickly over the past few years and is widely respected in the computer industry for its knowledge of the products it sells and the provision of good after-sales service. It supplies networking equipment that allows computers to communicate with each other.

Historically this has been a high-margin business but City analysts have started to worry that as networking becomes more established those high returns will fall. Azlan's recent

diversification into training added to City concerns.

The acquisition of Akam, which is a leading provider of network computer training in the Netherlands, employing 188 staff at four branches, was designed to augment that training business. Azlan already had three training sites in the UK and 10 in Europe.

Azlan's high-flying shares, which had come to the market at 230p in 1993, had already received one set-back in November when Mr Martin said he planned to sell 200,000 shares to raise £1.2m.

Battle for Lloyds Chemists renewed

Magnus Grimond

The £650m bid battle for Lloyds Chemists sparked into life yesterday after Gehe, the German bidder, said its rival UniChem would be better off mounting a share buy-back than bidding for Lloyds. In an echo of past attacks on UniChem, Gehe claimed the other bid held "substantial risks" for shareholders in both companies. In a letter addressed to UniChem's share-

holders, Dieter Kammerer, chairman of Gehe's management board, said they would gain more from a buy-back of UniChem shares at current levels than from acquiring Lloyds.

Buying 20 per cent of its shares would see a 13 per cent earnings enhancement in 1997, Gehe contends.

By contrast, if certain risks such as higher interest rates or the failure to achieve the planned synergies had mate-

rialised last year, the group would have suffered earnings dilution of over 13 per cent last year.

The latest onslaught in the bid battle, approaching its first anniversary, drew an immediate riposte from UniChem. Jeff Harris, chief executive, dismissed the claims as unspired.

"Gehe recognises the benefits of combining UniChem's business with Lloyds and that's why time after time it has

tried to paint a negative picture about our bid for Lloyds. Combining Lloyds and UniChem is expected to deliver an enhanced earnings stream for shareholders and to deliver value. Lloyds' shareholders should recognise the value of UniChem's offer."

There is not expected to be a high level of acceptance for UniChem's cash and shares terms when the results of the second closing date yesterday are announced on Monday.

Likely winners and losers under Labour

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

As 1997 gets under way one thing is certain – there will be an election this year. Not certain but probable is that the next government will be the first Labour administration for almost two decades and many first-time voters will for the first time in their lives experience something other than a Tory Britain. Plainly this year will be a watershed – what does it mean for investors?

A glance at history paints a rather encouraging picture. Some of the best years for stock market investors were in the Labour administration of the late 1970s when, albeit from a very low base after the great bear market of 1973 and 1974, shares quadrupled. The Tory years that opened the 1970s, blighted by the oil shocks and first miners' strike, were an unmitigated disaster for equities.

So much for history. On policy, the rather unsatisfactory answer is that Tony Blair and his shadow cabinet have given so little away that it is hard to make out Labour's economic and social plans. But a picture is beginning to emerge and it is possible to make at least broad brush forecasts about which sectors will be the greatest winners and losers from a change of government.

It looks likely that Labour will inherit a healthier economic landscape than at any time in living memory. The UK appears to have pulled off the trick of creating economic growth without driving up inflation. Its external account is broadly in balance and unemployment is falling. It would take a loner strain of Labour than the current one to do too much damage in those circumstances.

There is a fairly broad consensus that the stock market will enjoy a jolly year, even more in thrall to Wall Street than it has always been and vulnerable to even apparently minor pieces of US economic news.

Within what many brokers predict will be a broadly unchanged market, however, some sectors look more appealing than others. Some of the strongest performers of 1996, sectors broadly influenced by increased consumer spending, look like having another good year. Labour has spoken of becoming the party of low taxation so an early fiscal hit to the consumer

looks unlikely, either from higher income tax rates or an extension to VAT. Indeed, one of Labour's few policy commitments is to reduce the rate of VAT applicable to fuel and energy so additional spending power might be freed up from that source.

Best of the consumer areas are those associated with discretionary spending such as retailers, leisure companies, brewers and restaurants. The food sectors are less susceptible to changes in discretionary spending and could lag in the absence of inflation. Alcoholic beverages' fortunes, while discretionary, are determined by wider global pricing issues and may struggle to progress.

Given Labour's unwillingness to tax the individual, it seems likely that it will pay for its other commitments in education and health by increasing the take from corporate taxation. According to NatWest Securities, a 2p

rise in company tax to 35p in the pound is possible. That will hit companies across the board, but the other widely flagged plans such as the proposed windfall tax will hit certain utilities hard. Much of that is already priced in, however, and arguably some companies now look oversold.

Another area where the stock market may be worrying unduly is service companies where the fear is that the introduction of a minimum wage will push up overheads. Initially the attitude of business to the idea of a pay floor was quite hostile but many quoted companies have changed tack, realising that they pay more than the projected bottom hourly rate and might benefit if smaller rivals are put out of business by the move.

Perhaps the biggest winners of all will be manufacturing companies, which have always been lent a sympathetic ear by Labour. It has usually

been prepared to bail British manufacturers out with a devaluation of the pound. There is the prospect of investment being given a boost by increased depreciation allowances and infrastructure spend may increase.

Perhaps the biggest change of all in recent years, however, is the absence of any tangible difference between the two main parties. With economic decisions increasingly governed by the hidden hand of global capital markets, Westminster's power is on the wane. That can only be a good thing for investors.

T&N undergoes a sea change

The flurry of excitement yesterday over the possibility that T&N might be about to lose its option to buy Ger-

man pistons manufacturer Kolbenschmidt serves to underline the sea change that has taken place at the former asbestos producer. The attempt to take over Kolbenschmidt has been a long saga and the lapsing of the option over a quarter of the shares held by Commerzbank was not being seen yesterday as a serious set-back to T&N's ambitions. But it is significant in that for the first time in ages the investment focus has switched back to its engineering business rather than the asbestos-liabilities that have dogged the group for so long.

The thanks for that go to November's ground-breaking insurance deal, the £92m premium for which was paid on Thursday. Along with close to £500m of provisions, it is hoped that the resulting £1.2bn cover for future liabilities from those suffering from asbestos-related diseases will cap what had seemed like an open-ended responsibility.

The net result is that the market can increasingly focus on the company's main automotive components businesses, ranging from brake linings to engine parts. Paradoxically, it is the group's previous underperformance here that could make it more attractive to investors for two reasons.

Firstly, there should be benefits in the share price as management focuses all its attention on improving cash flow and the performance of some of its manufacturing operations. Cash flow has been abysmal for years, but management are now getting to grips with the underlying problems. Working capital at the half year in June had been slashed from £84.9m to £50.9m, although with stocks still at well over two months' supplies there is clearly plenty to go for.

The second reason for hope about T&N is that a rival like GKN will now do the recovery job itself by taking it over. Either way, releasing time and resources from asbestos should allow the group to concentrate on expanding its operations overseas.

If profits hit the £164m forecast by Charterhouse Tilney this year, the shares at 174p, up 3.5p, look good value on a forward p/e of 9. The danger remains that T&N is being guilty of the over-optimism that has been its hallmark in the past, but the odds here are better than for some time.

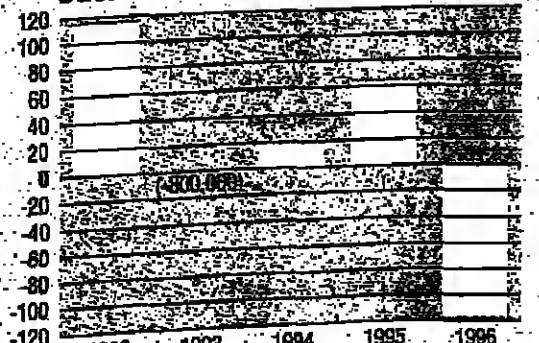
T&N: AT A GLANCE

Market value: £927.7m, share price 174.5p

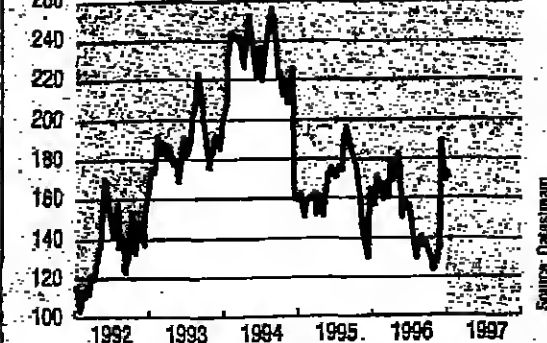
Five Year record	1993	1994	1995	1996*	1997*
Pre-tax profits (£m)	70.3	10.7	120	-358	164
Dividends per share (pence)	10.9	10.9	6.0	6.0	6.5

*Charterhouse Tilney Securities forecast

Cash flow £m



Share price pence



IN BRIEF

Costain faces second hostile meeting

Besieged construction group Costain faces its second hostile extraordinary meeting in just over a week on Monday when it gathers at London's Barbican Centre to ratify part of its recently announced rescue plan.

It will also discuss the issue of new shares to its Indonesian backers. Friends of the Earth has indicated it plans to mount a protest at the meeting over Costain's continuing involvement with the controversial Newbury bypass.

Hudson quits Wagon Industrial

John Hudson has resigned from Wagon Industrial, the troubled engineering group with immediate effect. A statement said Mr Hudson had seen the appointment of David Kendall as successor to retiring chairman Paul Taylor as "an appropriate time to seek new challenges". A successor will be sought in the new year.

Scott Pickford bid war on cards

A bid war for the oil exploration and engineering group Scott Pickford looked likely yesterday after the company said it had received a bid approach "from a substantial and credible party". The announcement means a second potential takeover has emerged for the group after Australian company Aerodata expressed an interest in a takeover last month. Scott Pickford said that if a new offer were made it would probably be at around 53p a share compared with the 48p a share offered by Aerodata. Aerodata, which provides information from the air and related services for oil and mineral exploration companies, planned to buy 2.5 million shares at 48p each, giving it a 20 per cent stake in Scott Pickford. Scott Pickford's AIM quoted shares rose 6.5p on the news to 51p.

Rotork sells loss-makers for £1.4m

Rotork, the specialist engineering group, has sold its two loss-making analysis businesses for a combined total of £1.4m. The gas business has been acquired by Signal Instruments while the oil refinery unit has gone to Sysco Analytics. Rotork's chief executive, Bill Whiteley, said: "The disposal of Rotork Analysis's businesses results from a strategic review which has been undertaken during the year. Rotork wishes to focus on areas which are more complementary to its core actuation business."

French car sales slump forecast

Sales of new cars in France are expected to decline by around 10 per cent to 1.93 million units in 1997, according to a senior director at Peugeot. Orders declined 10 per cent in December after a similar drop in November, with the reduction reflecting the ending of a government subsidy for new car purchases in September, he said.

ICI buys Swiss paint group

ICI has strengthened its European operations through the acquisition of a Swiss paints group Rutz und Huber. The firm has been the exclusive distributor of ICI's Autocolor car refinishing and commercial transport products in Switzerland for the past 20 years. Rutz und Huber has annual sales of around £3m.

Asda property on parade

Asda Property Holdings has acquired a parade of shops in Solihull from Land Securities for £6.2m. The current rental is £609,000 a year.

market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100
4089.5 + 32.1

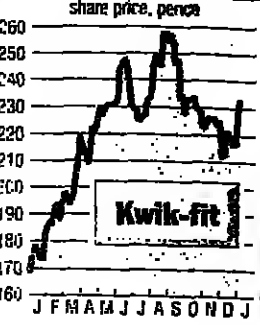
FTSE 250
4493.6 + 24.2

FTSE 350
2932.7 + 14.8

SEAQ VOLUME
519.6m shares,
29,414 bargains

Gifts index
N/A

Share spotlight



Almost like old times as Hanson tops blue-chip pile

It was almost like old times - Hanson top of the blue chips pile. What is left of the once feared empire rose 4.25p to 85.75p, highest since October. US buying, including a programme trade, was the spur for the advance. Many American deals were completed at the equivalent of 88p.

Last year Hanson's much vaunted demerger left Millennium Chemicals and Imperial Tobacco as stand-alone companies. Energy Group, embracing Eastern Electricity, is due to go its own separate way in the next month or so.

The rumour of the once sprawling conglomerate, emblazoned as New Hanson, is already flexing its muscles and talking about US acquisitions.

Andrew Dougal, chief executive, has said it is seeking US takeovers, an ambition which could inspire the US interest. A large acquisition is not contemplated but Hanson



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

House of Fraser was firm at 151.5p. Franklin, a US investment group, and its affiliates have built a 9 per cent shareholding. Turnover topped, according to Seag, 1 million shares with a series of market-maker trades going through at 152p intriguing observers.

The cold weather failed to provide much inspiration for oil shares but Kwik-Fit, the tyres and exhausts group, jumped 15.5p to 233p, anticipating the impact of the icy conditions on car parks.

Railtrack was back on the buy track riding ahead 15p to 394.5p and offering a good head of steam for GB Railways, due to arrive on the market on

Monday. Placed at 100p the shares are expected to race ahead to around 180p.

GB has the franchise to operate Anglia Railways and is seeking other routes. The founders will have 23.14 per cent after the flotation and a raft of options.

The latest football club to arrive, West Bromwich Albion took AIM via an introduction: opening price was £280.

West Brom play Chelsea today in the FA Cup. Chelsea Village, running the Stamford Bridge club, gained 4p to 121.5p. Executives of the late Matthew Harding, the former vice-chairman, exercised an option to buy 7.5 million shares

at 60p, taking the Harding stake to 27 per cent.

Glaxo Wellcome ignored doubts, expressed in this week's *Lancet* medical journal, about its Laminidine drug used in liver transplants. The shares rose 7p to 933.5p. Bio-compatibles International romped ahead another 40p to 905p; ML Laboratories continued its hesitant recovery with a 19p advance to 229.5p.

Granada added 12p to 858p after completing the sale of the Hotel George V in Paris and EMI, the hot takeover stock of 1997, produced another high note performance, up 23.5p to 1,402.5p.

National Westminster Bank was 11.5p higher at 696.5p after Credit Lyonnais Laing described the shares as the cheapest in the sector and a buy up to 900p.

Rolls-Royce reputed to be the SBC Warburg's share for the year, rose 8.5p to 259p and TI

Group, supported by ABN Amro Hoare Govett, put on 15p at 587.5p.

Among exploration shares JICK Oil & Gas, with interests in the former Soviet Union, fell 6p to 104p. The shares were 190p in the spring. Scott Pickford kept the oil take over pot boiling with news of a second potential bidder. The shares gained 6.5p to 51p.

Anite, the old Croy Electronics, managed a modest surge, gaining 5p to 41.5p as some banks on this side of its recovery. Highams Systems, supplying IT products and business services to the financial services industry, jumped 43.5p to 175p. The shares were floated last month at 72p.

Hambro Countrywide, continued to push ahead, up 2p to 101.5p, on the growing optimism for the housing market and SDX Business Systems gained 12p to 200.5p.

Taking Stock

[H]aemocoel, the struggling healthcare group which was once a high flyer, has managed to raise £2m to continue to develop and market its blood filter treatment. The company had warned that without new funds it would not be able to continue to trade. The shares, a casualty of the USM's closure, are due to start trading on AIM on Monday. Last price was 4p.

[R]angers, the Glasgow club traded on Offer, is rumoured to be near to seeking a stock market listing. The shares have been strong and rose a further 60p to 535p yesterday.

[X]avier Computer, the acquisition company, has completed the take over of CSI International for £3.2m in cash, shares and loan notes. The shares, suspended at 11p, are expected to return to AIM on Monday.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex-Gratias: Ex-dividend: An Ex all UK Unlisted Securities Market Suspended or Partly Suspend on N/A. P: Paid Shares. A: A.M. Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0800 123 333, and when prompted enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial data enter the 4-digit code followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

Anyone with a land-line telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including a list of the codes, call 0800 123 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 875 4376 (9.00am - 5.00pm).

Call cost 50p per minute (daytime), and 40p at all other times. Call charges include VAT.

Index	Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E	Index	Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
FTSE 100 - Real-time	00	4089.5	+32.1			UK Stock Market Report	01	4089.5	+32.1		
UK Company News	02					UK Company News	03				
UK Company News	04					UK Company News	05				
UK Company News	06					UK Company News	07				
UK Company News	08					UK Company News	09				
UK Company News	10					UK Company News	11				
UK Company News	12					UK Company News	13				
UK Company News	14					UK Company News	15				
UK Company News	16					UK Company News	17				
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UK Company News	20					UK Company News	21				
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UK Company News	24					UK Company News	25				
UK Company News	26					UK Company News	27				
UK Company News	28					UK Company News	29				
UK Company News	30					UK Company News	31				

Telecommunications

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
BT	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
BT Group	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
BT Group	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
BT Group	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
BT Group	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Textiles & Apparel

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Next	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Next	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Next	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Next	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Next	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Retailers, General

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
ASDA	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
ASDA	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
ASDA	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
ASDA	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
ASDA	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Pharmaceuticals

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Glaxo Wellcome	933.50	+7.00	4.00%	15.00
Glaxo Wellcome	933.50	+7.00	4.00%	15.00
Glaxo Wellcome	933.50	+7.00	4.00%	15.00
Glaxo Wellcome	933.50	+7.00	4.00%	15.00
Glaxo Wellcome	933.50	+7.00	4.00%	15.00

Printing & Paper

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Wiggins Teape	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Wiggins Teape	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Wiggins Teape	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Wiggins Teape	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Wiggins Teape	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Investment Companies

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Investment Company	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Company	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Company	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Company	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Company	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Investment Trusts

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Investment Trust	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Trust	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Trust	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Trust	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Investment Trust	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Life Assurance

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Life Assurance	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Life Assurance	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Life Assurance	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Life Assurance	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Life Assurance	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Media

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Media	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Media	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Media	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Media	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Media	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Property

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Property	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Property	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Property	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Property	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Property	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Support Services

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Support Services	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Support Services	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Support Services	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Support Services	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Support Services	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Water

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Water	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Water	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Water	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Water	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Water	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Transport

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Transport	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Transport	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Transport	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Transport	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Transport	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Government Securities

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Government Securities	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Government Securities	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Government Securities	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Government Securities	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Government Securities	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Medicines

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Medicines	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Medicines	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Medicines	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Medicines	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Medicines	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Longs

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Longs	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Longs	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Longs	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Longs	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Longs	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Shorts

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Shorts	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Shorts	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Shorts	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Shorts	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Shorts	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Index-linked

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Index-linked	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Index-linked	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Index-linked	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Index-linked	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Index-linked	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Unlisted

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Unlisted	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Unlisted	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Unlisted	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Unlisted	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Unlisted	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Chemicals

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Chemicals	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Chemicals	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Chemicals	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Chemicals	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Chemicals	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Engineering

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Engineering	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Engineering	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Engineering	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Engineering	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Engineering	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Food Manufacturers

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Food Manufacturers	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Food Manufacturers	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Food Manufacturers	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Food Manufacturers	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Food Manufacturers	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Gas Distribution

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Gas Distribution	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Gas Distribution	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Gas Distribution	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Gas Distribution	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Gas Distribution	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

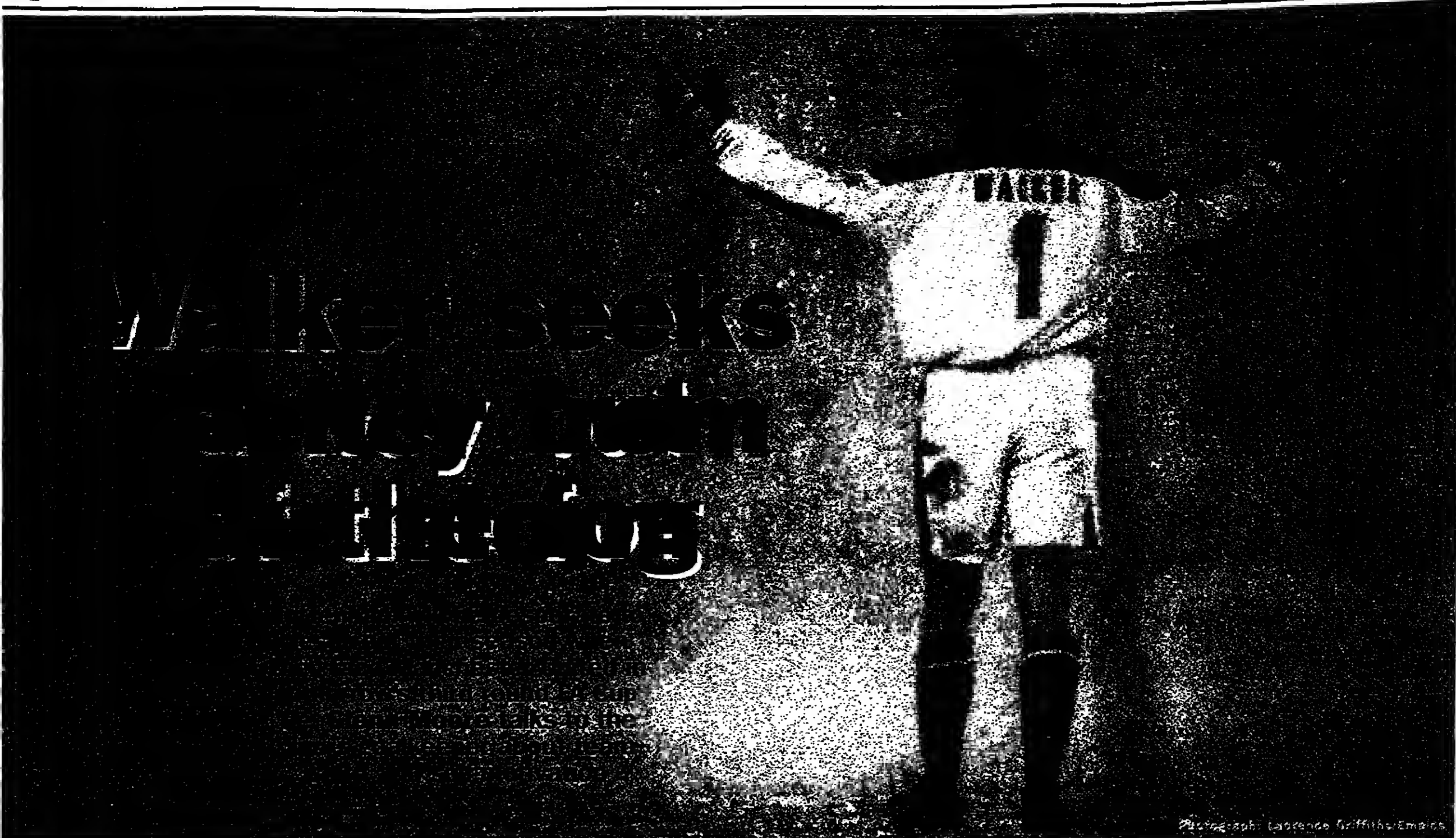
Building Materials

Share	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
Building Materials	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Building Materials	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Building Materials	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Building Materials	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00
Building Materials	100.00	+0.50	4.00%	15.00

Electronics

[illegible]

sport



Long after most of the Tottenham players had gone into the warm, Ian Walker was still diving around on the frozen earth at Tottenham's Chigwell training ground yesterday.

"Doesn't he get enough practice in matches," said one watching cynic. "Only at picking the ball out of the net," said another. Having become the butt of such jokes after last week's 7-1 thrashing at Newcastle, one would have thought that Walker would have gone into hiding. Not a bit of it. A quick shower later he sat down, orange juice and yogurt in hand, to explain why he was looking forward to tomorrow's FA Cup third-round tie against the holders, Manchester United, at Old Trafford.

"A game like this can work in our favour," he said. "It depends on our morale and spirit, how

we respond. No disrespect to Leicester [whose midweek League game with Spurs was frozen off] but it might have been hard to lift ourselves for that; we could have still been down after the weekend. But United at Old Trafford? If you are not up for that, you might as well not be in the game."

So how is the morale and spirit? "Not too bad considering the defeat and the injuries we have picked up. We're just looking to see who's fit. We need our experienced men for this one." Tottenham had just learned that Teddy Sheringham had joined Chris Armstrong, John Scales, Darren Anderson and Gary Mabbutt on the injured list while Sol Campbell, Steven Iversen and Rory Allen were doubtful, having been unable to train.

And Walker's own morale? "It's not nice as a goalkeeper to let in a lot of goals but I felt I played well at Newcastle. But

you say that to people and they look at the score and say, 'Oh yeah?' It was only the fifth goal [Philippe Albert's] which I was disappointed with. I didn't have much chance with the others."

Self-delusion? No. The Independent on Sunday's match reporter had the same view: Walker more than earned his Spurs. He was Tottenham's best player by the length of Scotswood Road. Walker is quick to accept blame when it's due. "It was different to the Bolton game," he said of the November Coca-Cola Cup tie Tottenham lost 6-1. "That was one of the worst games I played, and I said so. But after a couple of days I thought I had been too critical. I had made a couple of mistakes, not six."

The Bolton game was followed by the home defeat to Liverpool, in which Steve McNamara's innocuous shot hit a divot and bounced over

Walker's routine save. "I had felt confident in that game then that happened."

"But it's like my Dad says, things can't be up all the time, there will be downs. It is how you react to them," Walker's dad is Mike Walker, manager of Norwich and himself a former League goalkeeper. They speak on the phone but it is more a father-son relationship than a teacher-pupil one. "After Bolton he rang up to say don't worry about it," Walker said. "Then Norwich got beat five and six in a week and I was ringing him up and saying, 'don't worry. Now we've lost seven, it's like we're trying to outdo each other.'"

During the "downs" Walker reacts by looking at a wall of pictures from when he was young. I look at the goals I had when I was 10 and I have achieved all of them. I play for Tottenham. I've played for England. It's not that bad, is it?

"Now I want to win things with Tottenham and play regularly for England." With David Seaman injured and Tim Flowers' Blackburn place uncertain, Walker is aware that much could depend on the next few weeks. "I think David will be fit for the Italy game [12 February] but it is important to keep your form and for the team to do well. Tim Flowers found himself out of the squad when Blackburn were not doing well."

All of which adds to the importance of tomorrow's game. "If we win anybody's season can change on one result," Walker said. "If we lose, it puts pressure on us. Realistically it means we then can't win anything, and have to try and get into Europe."

Challenging for Europe? This is not how the likes of Walker, Campbell and Sheringham intend to spend their careers, and Spurs' recent fortunes have provoked speculation that their

better players may be thinking of moving to greener pastures. "I won't be happy just challenging for Europe but I hope we won't just be doing that. I'm really settled here - I've just signed a new contract. We are not far off being a very good side. We're still looking for new players and in Suffolk we have signed a very good one who'll be here for years to come."

How much can Walker expect from Spurs? The fans regard them as the equal of Arsenal, but as Gerry Francis noted yesterday: "Tottenham have only won one trophy in 13 years and not won the title in 36. The last two seasons [seventh and eighth] have been their best finishes in the League in seven seasons. When I was manager at QPR they finished 10th-Lith."

Damning figures. But Francis is as notorious for massaging of statistics as is the Department of Employment. The last two ex-

amples are slightly misleading and the third places achieved by Keith Burkinshaw (1982), David Pleat (1987) and Terry Venables (1990) are never mentioned.

But results are not the main problem as far as fans are concerned. They accept Francis has been restricted by injuries and unscheduled departures by the likes of Jürgen Klinsmann. They regard Alan Sugar as the real reason the club is slipping behind their neighbours. What they blame Francis for is the way Spurs are playing. Their feelings were summed recently when David Pleat said of a Spurs game: "Someone said they could not see the ball - I said look up in the air." He added that Allan Nielsen's long throws and Walker's goal-kicks were all Spurs had to offer as attacking options.

Pleat's own passing side is now a fond memory, Francis insisted: "I've been a manager for a long time now and I've nev-

er had had any of my teams questioned over their style of football. I played virtually the same at QPR, with two wingers and talented players like Teddy Sheringham." Yet Walker, when pressed, admitted: "I threw the ball out recently and the fans started clapping."

Which brought us to tomorrow's game. It is not inconceivable that Spurs could win. Away from home they seek to contain and counter. As Middlesbrough found earlier this season, it can be very effective, and not unattractive. However, once they have gone behind and have to chase the game, holes appear in the defensive organisation. That is what happened at Newcastle and it could do at Old Trafford.

"It would be nice to have a quiet game," Walker said, "but you don't go to Old Trafford and expect to have a comfortable afternoon. I'll expect a bombardment. That way I'll be ready."

No 199

Clive Walker

FAN'S EYE VIEW

by Paul Coleman

Ray Clemence must wince every time he sees Clive Walker's bald head. In 1978, Walker, then 19, was playing for struggling Chelsea. His blond hair flowing, Walker embarrassed a dozing Clemence with a 20-yard drive which sent mighty Liverpool - then European and League champions - crashing to a shock FA Cup third-round defeat at Stamford Bridge.

Walker, now 39, is ending his career as he began it, by scoring crucial FA Cup goals, this time for non-League Woking. He hit the winner against Millwall and an opener against Cambridge United. Third-round opponents Coventry City are Walker's next target. But I can vividly remember another day - 14 October 1978 - when Clive Walker caused absolute pandemonium.

Bolton Wanderers, newly promoted to the First Division, were hoping to be the fifth side in a row to thump the Blues at the Bridge. Bolton included a young lad called Peter Reid and two veteran former Manchester United stalwarts, Willie Morgan and Tony Dume.

Earlier that week, Chelsea had failed to persuade Johan Cruyff to come out of retirement. Rund Cruyff was not the first flying Dutchman Chelsea had set their sights on. Three times during that first half the Chelsea faithful were forced to watch Bob Dies, signed for £10,000 from non-League Weymouth, retrieve the ball from the back of Chelsea's net.

Alan Gowling's 18th and 41st-minute goals arrived like efficient trains on a rush-hour timetable, coming either side of a penalty converted after 35 minutes by Frank Worthington. Referee Eric Reid blew for half-time as the bright October sun beamed on our miserable faces in The Shed. Not even the most ardently orthodox fan believed that Chelsea, captained by Ray "Butch" Wilkins, managed by Ken Shillito, and inspired by neither, could silence that Bolton tune.

A few Chelsea fans sneaked home. During the second-half game and the crowd went to sleep. Bolton were content with 3-0 and Chelsea were intent on damage limitation.

Out of the dug-out clambered Clive Walker to replace the anonymous Garry Stanley. The Shed croaked one verse of "Clive Walker on the wing".

Walker was soon tormenting Paul Jones, Bolton's right-back. "Jones seemed to stand still," Walker said afterwards, describing his first touch of the ball. Walker cut past Jones and his low centre was stabbed home by "Tommy 'Lungs' Langley: 1-3. The 75th minute. At last, some consolation.

Langley's rare goal counted purely as consolation until the 82nd minute when Chelsea attacked with rare purpose. The ball sat up for Kenny Swain in the box. Surrounded by Bolton's Mike Walsh, Sam Allardyce, Roy Greaves and keeper Jim McDonagh, Swain slipped on to his backside and somehow managed to scuff the ball into Bolton's net: 2-3. Could Chelsea, now suddenly full of beans, equal an improbable equaliser in the remaining eight minutes?

The Shed was now alive, passionate, in full voice. Jittery Bolton tried possession play, orchestrated by the wily Worthington. It worked - until the 87th minute. A Wanderers attack broke down on the edge of the Chelsea box. Midfielder Ray Lewington hit the best pass of his entire career, a long, high raking effort that fell plumb into Walker's flight path on Chelsea's left wing.

Walker left Jones stumbling in his slipstream on the half-way line. Chelsea's new East Stand stood up as one and roared as Walker arrowed straight for Bolton's goal, entering Bolton's area one-on-one with McDonagh. The keeper appeared to sit back slightly as Walker's shot sped past his fingertips.

The back of that deep net billowed. 3-3. Stamford Bridge

erupted with unbridled joy. "We've got the bastards on the rack now," erupted a bloke who had stood dormant beside me during the first half. The Bolton fans were in mute shock at the other end.

The last minute and hardly any injury time due. Magnetically, Walker again collected the ball wide on the left. En masse the East Stand rose again. Walker scampered forward and reached the edge of the box at an acute angle. His left leg connected sweetly with the ball, a belter of a low cross-cum-shot. The ball skimmed hard and low over the turf, passing McDonagh. Bolton defender Sam Allardyce, retreating desperately, slid out a leg but only managed to slice Walker's drive into the roof of that Bolton net. From 0-3 to 4-3. Pandemonium at the Bridge as Read blew the final whistle.

I can still hear the noise of that 19,879 crowd whenever I look at the photograph which captures the immediate aftermath of Walker's winner. The shell-shocked McDonagh and the distraught, motionless Allardyce, lying face down, legs wide apart as if he had been shot in the back; the drained, forlorn figure of Walsh and Langley, peeling away in sheer delight, as the ball drops from the roof of the net.

A postscript to my fond memories of that afternoon came three seasons ago, many years after I had divorced Chelsea to shack up with my local non-League hopefuls, Enfield. Woking, the visitors in an FA Trophy semi-final, included a balding, podgy winger by the name of Clive Walker.

Clive looked good, a real old pro. Enfield were dumped and Walker and Woking went on to be winners at Wembley. He never got there with Chelsea, so I was pleased he had a Wembley memory. Walker might now be 39 but, even if Woking are 3-0 down at Coventry, you certainly won't catch me sneaking out before that final whistle blows.

MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

TODAY	19 Reading v Southampton	33 Luton Orient v Mansfield	47 East Stirling v Boro
3.00 unless stated	20 Sheffield Wednesday v Grimsby	34 Wigan v Hartlepool	48 Forfar v Alloa
FA Cup third round	21 Stevenage v Birmingham		
	(at St Andrew's, Birmingham)		
4.00 unless stated	22 Stoke v Stockport	35 Aberdeen v Durness	49 Ross County v Montrose
4.15 unless stated	23 Wolves v Portsmouth	36 Celtic v Motherwell	50 Dundee v Dundee
4.30 unless stated	24 Wrexham v West Ham	37 Dundee Utd v Falkirk	51 Whitehill v Queen of the South
Nationwide Football League			
Second Division	25 Southend v Preston		
4.00 unless stated	26 Brighton v Exeter		
4.15 unless stated	27 Walsley v Stockport		
Third Division			
4.00 unless stated	28 Luton v Lincoln		
4.15 unless stated	29 Cambridge Utd v Northampton		
4.30 unless stated	30 Cardiff City v Scunthorpe		
Non-League Football			
4.00 unless stated	31 Doncaster v Rochdale		
4.15 unless stated	32 Hartlepool v Darlington		
4.30 unless stated	33 Hull City v Colchester		

FA Cup third round

TODAY

Arsenal v Sunderland
Wales striker Hargrett replaces suspended Wright for Arsenal. Injuries are also a major worry - with Seaman, Platt, Dixon and Gards all ruled out, but Bergmeier, Adams, Merson and Perrot have all passed fitness tests. Russell has recovered from flu and is in contention to return to Sunderland's attack but, with Rees still unavailable, they may be unchanged and lose the side who have lost Coventry to a 2-2 draw on New Year's Day.

Blackburn v Port Vale
Blackburn is fit again after an ankle injury and could be brought in as a Rover substitute. The versatile Warhurst is recalled to the squad. Vale have major injury worries over Robert (knee) and Agbin (groin). There are also slight doubts over Porter, Walker and Mills, so Jermain and Stokes are on standby.

Cardiff v Tranmere
Cardiff manager Day, a Cup winner with West Ham in 1975, was voted Third Division manager of the month yesterday. Simonsen could earn an FA Cup debut for Tranmere in place of the injured Coyne.

Chelsea v West Brom
Vallie may have to wait for a Chelsea recall. West Brom's new central defender, Murphy, is standing by to make his debut in place of Burgess, who was forced off with a knee injury during Bolton's New Year's Day defeat by Tottenham.

Coventry v Walsley
Coventry have defenders Westwood and Smith back from suspension. The only absentee is Rivers, who has undergone surgery for a hernia and is likely to be out for six weeks. Wals-

ley should be unchanged after just one defeat in 20 games.

Liverpool v Barnsley
Liverpool are expected to rest leading scorer Fowler, who is struggling to shake off the effects of a groin injury. Ruddock will be looking to recover from a pulled hamstring which saw him substituted against Chelsea on New Year's Day, so Merson stands by. Barnsley have defender Swain missing through suspension, but Beresford, Whitham, Barnes and David have all shrugged off injuries.

Middlesbrough v Chester
Middlesbrough recall Whyte after suspension and a broken nose. He takes over from manager Robson, who has suffered another acetabular fracture following his Premiership comeback at Arsenal. Juninho is ruled out by a thigh strain. Fleming and Stamp are added to the squad. Chester will be without five key players. New signings McDonald and Reid are ineligible, while Davidson, Fitzpatrick and skipper Jackson will be suspended. Shelton, Miller and Woods are all likely to return.

Norwich v Sheffield Utd
Midfielder man Crook is recalled after missing Norwich's last three games with a calf injury. Also back is Carey, but full-backs Bradshaw and Mills are out. The Blues are without Vokk, Ward, Whitham and Short (all injured), while Taylor and Hutchinson have flu.

Nottingham Forest v Ipswich
Forest caretaker manager Pearce will be without Gough and Blatnik, but Bert Williams is back in the squad after a 10-week absence. Ipswich will have Williams back after flu, which forced him to miss the New Year's Day draw at Charlton, but Mason now has the same problem.

Plymouth v Peterborough
Plymouth hope Grobbelaar will be fully recovered from flu. Caruthers and Payne have both been passed fit for Peterborough, but on-loan Donovan is ineligible. Charlery has been suffering from flu, but is likely to play.

QPR v Huddersfield
Rangers will be without the services of McDermott and Alan McDonald. McDermott is currently in jail representing Australia in a youth tournament while McDonald is serving a one-match ban. Huddersfield have defensive worries with Sinner (Achilles) doubtful and Rooney and Sam Collins out.

Reading v Southampton
Reading should be unchanged but strikers Morley and Hogan go into the Cup contest knowing that the club are looking to sign a forward on loan to boost their goal output. For the Saints Morley is struggling with flu. Bennett will continue in goal as Taylor is cup-tied. Manager Souness will make a late decision on whether to start with England midfielder Le Tissier. Midfielder Odeley is in contention for a recall after recovering from a chest infection.

Sheff Wed v Grimsby
Wednesday's Carbone is out with a groin strain. St. Hest, Booth and Humphreys contest places in the youth tournament while McDonald is serving a one-match ban. Huddersfield have defensive worries with Sinner (Achilles) doubtful and Rooney and Sam Collins out.

Stoke v Stockport
Stoke will be without on-loan pair Davis and Simpson plus regular signing Compton, who has a recurrence of hamstring trouble. City will seek inspiration from Waddle.

Swansea v Walsley
Swansea will be without on-loan pair Davis and Simpson plus regular signing Compton, who has a recurrence of hamstring trouble. City will seek inspiration from Waddle.

Wolves v Portsmouth
Thompson is fit again after missing Wolves' last four games with a calf strain. Roberts is fit after flu but Richards is still struggling with a knee problem. Pompey are without Svensson (suspension) and Bradbury (flu). Dumfries and Hill are set to deputise while Hiller could be recalled after recovering from a hamstring injury.

Wrexham v West Ham
Wrexham are hoping that Connolly and Brace will be fit. Carey is certain to be back in action after a two-match ban. West Ham welcome back Breacher, who is likely to replace Bowen. Rowland returns after flu and manager Redknapp is keen for Jones to face his former club. Both overcome knee problems and start the game up front.

Wye v Walsley
Wye will be without on-loan pair Davis and Simpson plus regular signing Compton, who has a recurrence of hamstring trouble. City will seek inspiration from Waddle.

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Spirit Walker

Spurs' No 1 looks for FA Cup salvation against United, page 22

sport

Greenwood's goal

Testing rugby contest for Leicester's centre, page 20

144

1.46pm: England go into bat after Zimbabwe make 249 for 7 in their allotted 50 overs

4.14pm: England are all out for 118 in 30 overs. Five of their batsmen make ducks

Just when we thought England couldn't do any worse...

DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Harare
Zimbabwe 249-7
England 118
Zimbabwe win by 131 runs

There are, it seems, few avenues other than winning a game, that this England team will not explore when they travel. This was their 12th successive limited-overs loss overseas to Test-playing countries.

However, yesterday's capitulation, their third in a row to Zimbabwe, was one of their least culpable. The demise was expertly hastened by the free-range chicken farmer, Eddo Brandes, who took his country's first hat-trick, finishing the match with 5 for 28.

On the evidence of the past month England have played some of the most imaginatively bereft cricket on the planet. Zimbabwe may only have 25 suitable cricketers to choose their national side from, but they are 25 motivated and thinking cricketers who work to a plan.

Strangely these are attributes their England counterparts seem to lack. Something England's attempts in the field neatly exemplified as Zimbabwe rattled up 249 for 7 off their 50 overs, as Alistair Campbell with an unbeaten 80, and Grant Flower with 62, took toll of some wayward bowling.

Such poor attention to basics has turned England into missionaries rather than conquerors. A role that was well served by a 3-0 whitewash in what is this country's most popular form of cricket. A white-wash that has done wonders for the interest levels of the black African population, who tend to prefer football.

The philanthropy is, of course, unintended, though you begin to wonder after hearing some of David Lloyd's utterances on this tour, of which the more memorable have nearly always come back to haunt him. The coach's latest offering being that: "The second leg of this tour starts with this last game not in New Zealand."

A day later he had to admit

the second leg had not started well. "There were things in Zimbabwe's play that were not in ours."

Brandes was certainly one of them, and he got much more from the conditions than any of England's bowlers.

Swinging the ball away as well as moving it occasionally off the pitch, Brandes bowled a full wicket-taking length that forced the batsman to play. It was a length not often matched by England's bowlers - though Mullyali again bowled well - after Mike Atherton had won the toss and put Zimbabwe in.

Busling in up the slope from the City End, Brandes had the first of his hat-trick victims, Nick Knight, caught down the leg-side in his second over. "It

was a pretty bad ball," he admitted, "but Knight seemed to jump at it and get a touch."

He wasn't the only one jumping as John Crawley went low first ball of Brandes' next over after missing a straight one that he tried to work to leg. It was one of five ducks - three of them first ball - that littered the England scorecard.

During the Test matches the 33-year-old Brandes had bowled well without reward. But if he was frustrated by it his next ball was worth all the near misses when a perfectly pitched outswinger found the edge of Nasser Hussain's bat. A delivery described by the bowler as "a magnificent jaffa" and one that a batsman's only real hope of surviving so early on, is to miss.

It was a great moment for Brandes who celebrated only the 10th hat-trick in one-day internationals with a barrel-chested chicken strut down the pitch towards Andy Flower.

His keeper had just managed to pull off an extraordinary diving catch in front of Campbell at first slip, the best of five safely pounced catches, including those of Atherton and Alec Stewart.

Brandes took four England wickets in Albany, when Zimbabwe beat England in a 1991/92 World Cup qualifier. On that occasion, the loss was shrugged off as an aberration. Now it has become a serious habit and one that John Embury, the assistant coach, believes can become difficult to shake off. As

if to emphasise the point, this was Zimbabwe's 10th one-day win out of 65, five of those wins coming against England.

England have simply been outwitted and outclassed by a side just learning to walk, a disappointment that Atherton denied he would run away from by resigning the captaincy.

"There are two options for me and the team," he said. "To give up or to fight on. I don't see any point in either of us giving up." It was a point echoed by Lloyd, who backed Atherton, saying he was "a very caring captain who looked after his team and who deserved the support of everyone."

England's malaise is not Atherton's fault, though he and his men have not enjoyed touring this country which, apart from being put firmly on the cricketing map, has raised serious questions over the standards and resilience of English cricket at all levels.

It is a moribund state of affairs that can be firmly attributed to a system which breeds predictable and uncompetitive players in an age when flair and vitality, have usurped the traditional values offered by playing percentages.

The panacea is not an easy one unless you are prepared to take the straightforward but contentious advice: yelled by a drunken reveller after Zimbabwe's crushing victory. "Send England home," he bellowed, "and bring out the wives."



The England vice-captain Nasser Hussain starts the long walk back to the pavilion after being caught off the first ball he faced yesterday

Photograph: Empics

Harare scoreboard

England bowled	Zimbabwe bowled
G W Flower c Mullyali b White 62 (123 min, 87 balls, 6 fours)	A V Knight c A Flower b Brandes 13 (13 min, 8 balls)
A C Walker run out (Stewart-Stewart) 19 (64 min, 41 balls, 1 four)	N A Stewart c A Flower b Brandes 28 (70 min, 40 balls, 2 fours)
"D R Campbell not out 89 (146 min, 202 balls, 4 fours, 1 six)	J P Crawley then b Brandes 0 (4 min, 2 balls)
A Flower c Stewart b Isaac 35 (37 min, 30 balls, 3 fours, 1 six)	H Hussain c A Flower b Brandes 0 (2 min, 1 ball)
C W Eales c Stewart b Isaac 14 (14 min, 5 balls)	M A Atherton c A Flower b Brandes 13 (82 min, 42 balls, 1 four)
G J Whitham c Croft 1 (15 min, 4 balls)	R C Iremonger c Stewart b Isaac 10 (10 min, 6 balls)
D L Houghton c Stewart b Mullyali 16 (23 min, 22 balls, 2 fours, 1 six)	C E W Silverwood c Eales b Whitham 0 (1 min, 1 ball)
Eales bowled 0 (65 min, 102 balls, 1 four, 1 six)	R D B Croft not out 13 (13 min, 37 balls, 1 four, 1 six)
P A Sangha not out (Whitham) 23 (12 min, 10 balls, 1 four, 1 six)	G McGrath c Stewart b Isaac 7 (14 min, 8 balls, 1 four)
Extras (b4, b6, w6, no2) 23 (12 min, 10 balls, 1 four, 1 six)	R D B Croft not out 13 (13 min, 37 balls, 1 four, 1 six)
Total (for 7, 233 min, 50 overs) 349	C E W Silverwood c Eales b Whitham 0 (1 min, 1 ball)
Fall: 1-38 (Walker), 2-33 (G W Flower), 3-38 (A Flower), 4-123 (Eales), 5-100 (Whitham), 6-220 (Houghton), 7-249 (Stewart). Did not bat: H H Stewart, E A Brandes, J A Rennie.	Extras (b6, w6) 13
Bowling: Mullyali 10-3-28-1 (w2), G-3-23-0, 2-0-16-1; McGrath 10-3-42-1 (w2), w2 (4-0-10-0, 2-0-14-0, 4-1-9-1); Silverwood 5-0-27-0 (w2) (one special); White 7-0-39-1 (w2) (2-0-9-0, 3-0-15-1, 2-0-15-0); Isaac 10-0-38-3 (w1) (one special); Croft 8-0-34-1 (2-0-17-0, 0-0-37-1).	Total (148 min, 50 overs) 249
Progress: 50: 56 min, 83 balls, 100: 100 min, 136 balls, 200: 140 min, 128 balls, 200: 186 min, 267 balls.	Fall: 1-0 (Hussain), 2-43 (Crawley), 3-13 (Eales), 4-45 (Stewart), 5-54 (Atherton), 6-138 (Iremonger), 7-63 (Whitham), 8-77 (Cough), 9-118 (Mullyali).
England's 50: 50 min, 67 balls, 6 fours.	Bowling: Brandes 10-0-28-4 (w1), Isaac 10-0-30-2 (w3), w3; Stewart 5-0-18-1 (w1); Whitham 8-0-14-0 (one special catch).
	Progress: 50: 79 min, 59 balls, 100: 132 min, 181 balls.
	Umpires: D J Robinson and R B Tiffin.

England's lowest one-day totals

93 v Australia (Headingley) 1975	122 v Pakistan (Lahore) 1983
94 v Australia (Headingley) 1979	125 v West Indies (Antigua) 1981
114 v West Indies (Bridgetown) 1986	125 v Zimbabwe (Harare) 1997
115 v South Africa (East London) 1996	127 v New Zealand (Christchurch) 1989
118 v Zimbabwe (Harare) 1997	132 v Pakistan (Shahjahan) 1985

'We have to rethink our one-day strategy'

The England captain, Mike Atherton, remained defiant about England's chances of a Test series victory in New Zealand, despite yesterday's humiliation by Zimbabwe.

"Zimbabwe played very well," Atherton said. "They batted well, very positively and Eddo Brandes bowled a magic spell with the new ball. When you lose three wickets for 20 runs you are struggling to win the match. We played poorly in the one-day internationals and have to rethink our strategy

there. But in the Test matches I firmly believe we were the better side in both of these and given a better run with the rain would have come out winners."

Atherton refused to be drawn on his future as captain, saying only he "would see what happens" when his contract runs out at the end of the winter. But he insisted that he - and the rest of the side - were confident about the New Zealand leg of the tour. "We have got to have confidence in ourselves and we are

still confident of doing well in New Zealand," he said. "It has been disappointing to lose here and disappointing to lose 3-0 but we are looking forward to New Zealand, to work hard and improve over there."

"No doubt people back home will be disappointed and upset and I am disappointed and upset - as are the players, but we are looking forward to getting it right in New Zealand." The former England captain Bob Willis was scathing about

England after the match. "We are getting pretty desperate now," he said. "This was the watermark for England against Zimbabwe and New Zealand. Zimbabwe are at the bottom of the ladder and England are quickly replacing them. We are fast going down the cricketing plughole here."

The England coach David Lloyd - who also refused to be drawn about his future - stressed the difference between one-day and Test matches, and denied that England had ever under-

estimated the African side. We have never ever said this was a knock-out outfit," he said. "They played very good, very forceful cricket throughout this one-day series and we perhaps were not up to it."

"We will regroup and come again with confidence. We will not be low when we move on to New Zealand. The players know they have not played to their maximum and they have a great challenge in New Zealand."

Wilkinson waits for job offer from FA

Football
RUPERT METCALF

After all the talk of the Football Association turning to some distinguished foreign coaching guru in its search for its first technical director, it seems that the job is to be given to a Yorkshireman whose main experience of international football was with the England semi-professional team.

Howard Wilkinson, the former manager of Leeds United (and, among other teams, Boston United and the England non-league XI) is expected to be given the new post of FA technical director on Monday. The 53-year-old native of Sheffield has been tipped for the job for some weeks, after potential overseas candidates such as Arsene Wenger took alternative employment.

The technical director will have wide responsibilities - he will oversee the nurturing of talent from the grass roots upwards and will work closely with the England coach, Glenn Hoddle. Wilkinson reportedly turned down the post last year, when he chose to battle on as Leeds manager. Now he is available after leaving Elland Road in September - and he recently turned down an approach from Manchester City.

Hoddle's predecessor as England coach, Terry Venables, turned down an approach to

coach Turkey last year, it was revealed yesterday when he arrived in Sydney to take charge of the Australian national team.

"I was close to [accepting one job offer] that was quite interesting," Venables said. "But I had a personal problem... if it had been under other circumstances, maybe it would have been different." He subsequently admitted that offer had come from Turkey, and that he had been given other prestigious opportunities. He will lead Australia for the first time later this month in a four-nation tournament involving Norway, New Zealand and South Korea.

The Aston Villa manager, Brian Little, will not be taking any disciplinary action against his striker Savo Milosevic for allegedly spitting at David Beckham in Wednesday's match at Manchester United. Little's assistant, Allan Evans, has studied television pictures of the incident and told him there was no case to answer. "Allan has said to me that, in his opinion, there is nothing untoward there," Little said.

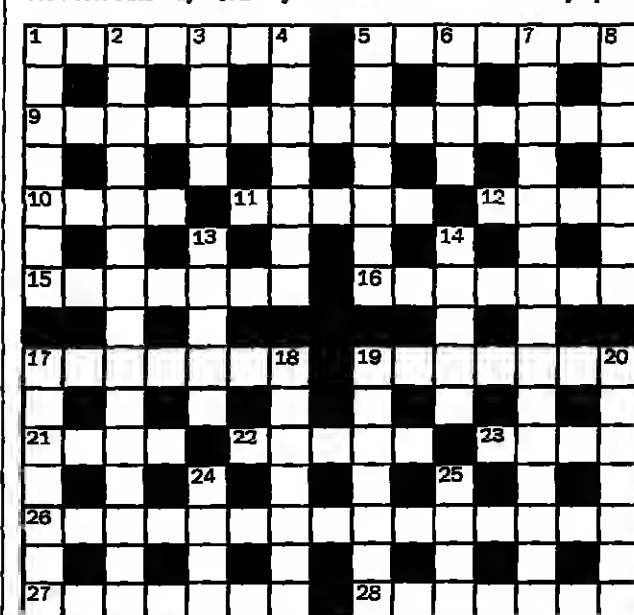
Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough player-manager who is 40 next week, has said he does not want to play again - despite managing 90 minutes against Arsenal on Wednesday. "My sciatica played me up," Robson said yesterday.

Julian Dicks has signed a new three-and-a-half year contract with West Ham, where his current deal expires this summer.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3187, Saturday 4 January

By Spurius



Friday's solution

FLAMINGO, BEREFT, O A N O O U, SOAN, OTEHOUND, K I H U O E, TOUCHINESS, YEAR, U H R I, OTHER, FISHORY, DOWN THE OUMPS, P O T L R, ZEST, MATCHMAKER, N O A R A M, MISERABLE, TRIMS, I E I G V S U, TREINING, KEEPTIME

Last Saturday's solution

SANOFIT, DELETED, S O A H O V A T, EXTENSION, REBUS, E A R N A E, ZEBRA, SCOTCH, EGGS, I E R O K V A R, RELATIVE, CLAUSE, CLUBSANDWICHES, I N N E R Z B, ASTRA, ODDLE, ARENA, T R N N T K L, USTING, GALLIOTICK, C S A N V E A, AUDITOR, GREMLIN

ACROSS

- Scale badly affecting sluices (7)
- Bowl with endlessly attractive engraving (7)
- Qualification held by chemistry teacher, maybe? (6, 2, 7)
- Letter pervasively written in ptois (4)
- Condescend to put in a concession (5)
- Pry for entertainment provided by daughter (4)
- Film-maker on cardinal's staff (7)
- Attempt to comprehend old work by Aeschylus (7)
- Post Office or other communications centre (7)
- Sauce boat in residence at solid (7)
- Used to swim in river once a week then? (7)
- Scope to have medical establishment overturned on appeal (5)
- Quick way to get in fodder (5)
- Ill-gotten gains (4, 3)
- Modern fashions in physical units (7)
- Citadel in Royal Mile perhaps held by king and knight (7)
- Opera performing remarkably in the classics? (7)
- Cross in form of amulet (4)
- Swindle that is American? (4)

DOWN

- Join search in Spain (7)
- The right heel? (4, 2, 9)
- Prickly plant one left with former partner (4)
- Abridge others' works, appending brief note (7)
- A cry following wife's selfish failure (7)
- Old poet with nothing against primitive urges (4)
- Take home the wrong baby? (7, 3, 5)
- Used to swim in river once a week then? (7)
- Scope to have medical establishment overturned on appeal (5)
- Quick way to get in fodder (5)
- Ill-gotten gains (4, 3)
- Modern fashions in physical units (7)
- Citadel in Royal Mile perhaps held by king and knight (7)
- Opera performing remarkably in the classics? (7)
- Cross in form of amulet (4)
- Swindle that is American? (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the new Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P. O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: David Jones, London E5; James Munday, Broom of Gairdy, S Barras, York; Dana Steen, Llandudno; B & P Brown, Chipping.

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And So To Bed Studios at

Middleborough 0164 235 0555, Bath 01225 444 4555

Newcastle 0191 261 6666, Grimsby 0146 335 3355

Major Press

in Albums

1. The Beatles - 1968

2. The Rolling Stones - 1969

3. The Who - 1970

4. The Jimi Hendrix Experience - 1971

5. The Black Sabbath - 1972

6. The Deep Purple - 1973

7. The Led Zeppelin - 1974

8. The Pink Floyd - 1975

9. The Queen - 1976

10. The David Bowie - 1977

11. The Sex Pistols - 1978

12. The The - 1979

13. The Siouxsie and the Banshees - 1980

14. The Cure - 1981

15. The Smiths - 1982

16. The New Order - 1983

17. The Depeche Mode - 1984

18. The Erasure - 1985

19. The Pet Shop Boys - 1986

20. The Duran Duran - 1987

21. The Eurythmics - 1988

22. The Thompson Twins - 1989

23. The Jesus and Mary Chain - 1990

24. The Primal Scream - 1991

25. The Ride - 1992

26. The Smashing Pumpkins - 1993

27. The Stone Temple Pilots - 1994

28. The Verve - 1995

29. The Radiohead - 1996

30. The Blur - 1997